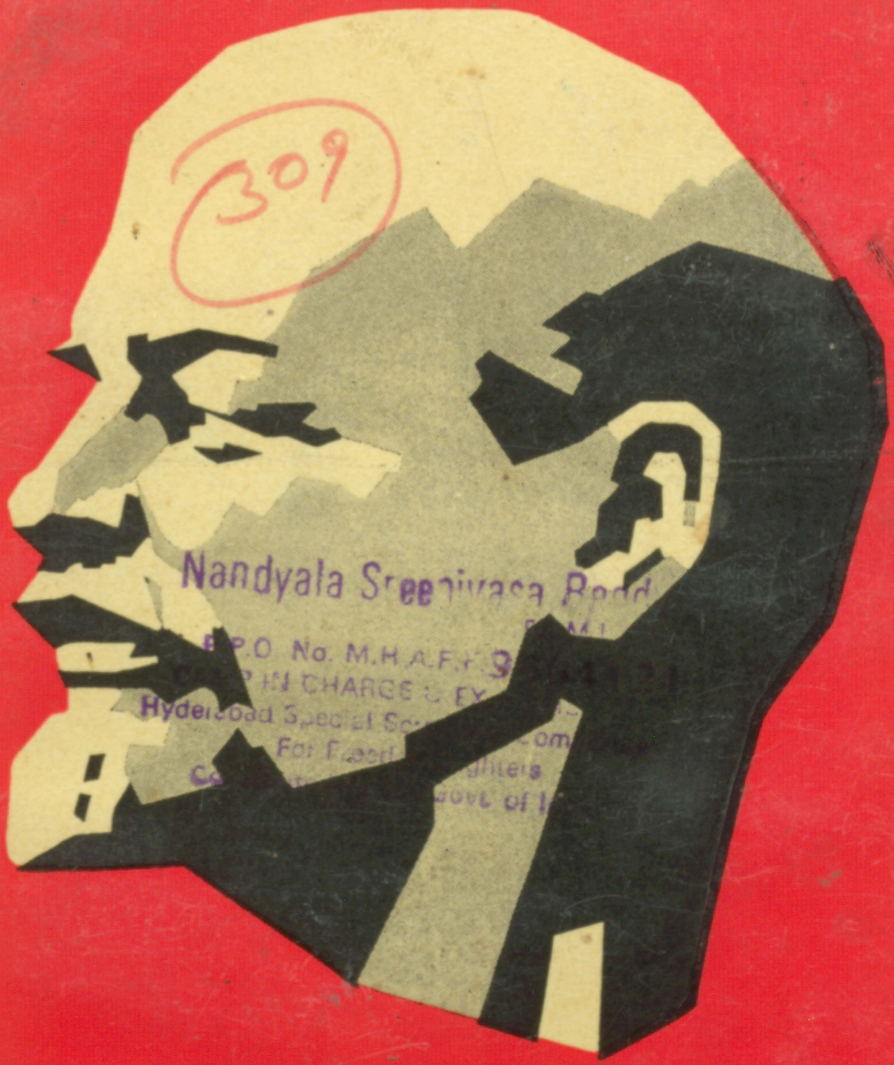

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Nandyala Sreenivasa Redd
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Hyderabad Special
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# LENIN

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# LENIN AND INDIA

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*Edited by*

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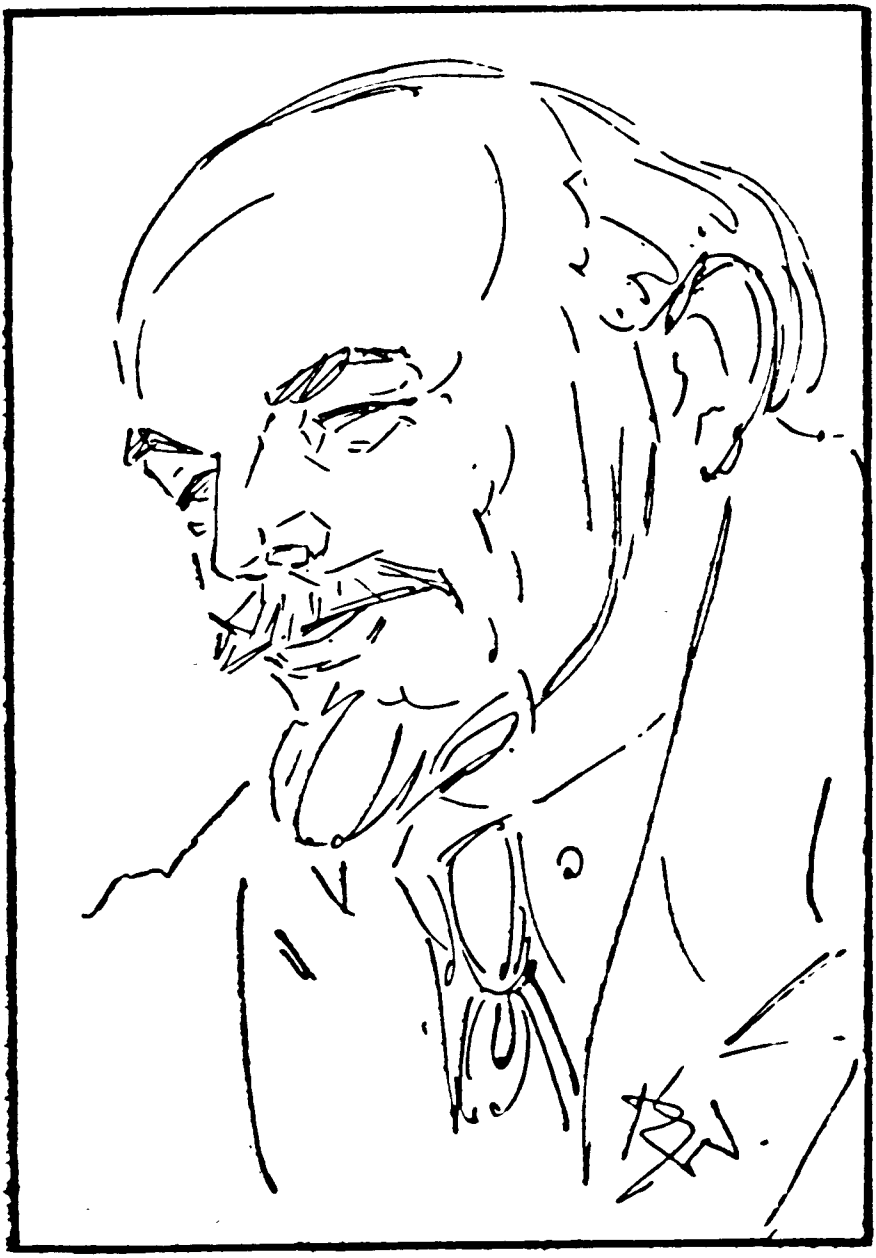

*Lenin is born in our blood,*
*Debt no more to cowardice within,*
*And with revolution's throb in my heart*
*I feel I am Lenin !*

Sukanta Bhattacharya

# INTRODUCTION

The whole world is now celebrating the centenary of the birth of Lenin—not only his loyal followers but those who are inveterate enemies of Leninism. No higher tribute can there be to his greatness and his popularity. Among writers there is none more read than he, and in all languages of the world. As a humane person he stands at the head of all.

What is this due to?—to his work and achievements. He brought Marxism from the realm of theory into that of practice. It is the fate of all great men to be reduced to Euclidean theorems which his followers rigorously apply. Marx met the same fate until Lenin developed the Marxian method.

In the field of economics, he studied the development of capitalism in Russia and its development into monopoly in the world and came to the conclusion that capitalism had reached the last, final stage—imperialism.

Basing himself on the immanent contradictions of capitalism brilliantly defined by Karl Marx in the famous ringing paragraph in his first volume of *Capital* which ends with the prophetic words "Expropriators will be expropriated", Lenin developed the theory of the three basic contradictions of modern capitalism in the stage of monopoly and imperialism.

These three basic contradictions are: the sharpening class conflict between capital and labour in the advanced capitalist countries; struggle between the big capitalist countries for markets and colonies leading to world wars; and the national liberation struggle of the less developed nations and peoples which the big capitalist countries had converted into their colonies and semicolonies.

Lenin's analysis of the specific features of capitalist development in Russia led him to the conclusion that the task of

completing the bourgeois democratic revolution in Russia, of overthrowing tsarist autocracy, of abolishing landlordism and establishing democracy will not be performed by the bourgeoisie, but by the proletariat in alliance with the vast mass of peasantry and the intellectuals, which will then immediately advance to the socialist revolution.

Lenin's analysis of modern capitalism—of monopoly and imperialism—which includes Russia also led him to three important new conclusions:

—That the revolution will not necessarily break out first in an advanced capitalist country but where, in the context of the developing crisis of capitalism, the chain of imperialism has the weakest link. Lenin confidently charted out the path for the victory of socialism in Russia—a country of medium capitalist development.

—That the proletariat fighting for socialism must come forward as the opponent of wars, wars of plunder and aggression, unleashed by the bourgeoisie including that of its own country, must seek to convert the war into a revolution, leading to peace without annexations, a peace based on the national selfdetermination of peoples.

—That the proletariat fighting for socialism must come forward as the opponent of national oppression, win the oppressed peoples fighting for their independence against imperialism as its allies.

Asserting these conclusions Lenin fought the revisionists and dogmatists, who stuck to the letter of Marx and negated its scientific and revolutionary essence. Lenin brilliantly applied the economic theory of Marx to solve the problems facing his own country and those of the contemporary world in which he lived and in doing so he created a theoretical and ideological weapon which armed the Russian proletariat in alliance with the peasantry and the intellectual strata to ensure the victory of the great October Socialist Revolution. It armed the proletariat and oppressed nations of the world to

win new victories. Onethird of the capitalist world has turned to socialism and the majority of the former colonies are now free and imperialism has been further weakened.

In the field of politics, Lenin propounded the theory of the proletarian state, carrying forward the heritage of the great Paris Commune. In the nonparty, multiclass mass organisations that arose spontaneously in the course of the first Russian revolution (1905), namely the Soviets, Lenin saw not only organs of struggle but of power, of proletarian dictatorship, of the new state that would arise after the break up of the bourgeois state machine. This state meant wide democracy for the masses and rigid control and restrictions on their former exploiters.

The third contribution of Lenin was in the sphere of building a proletarian party, the Communist Party in Russia and the Communist International on the world plane, leading to the establishment of communist parties in many countries.

Lastly comes the question of colonial revolutions—the duty of the proletariat of imperialist countries to help them, the duty of proletariat of colonial countries to help the revolutionary democratic liberation movement, the duty of the victorious proletariat to help in every possible way revolutions in the colonies.

These are some of the main contributions of Lenin to the treasury of Marxism, not to speak of questions of philosophy, women, nationalities, agriculture, industry, youth, art and literature, to which he made signal contribution. The genius of Lenin was multifaceted and enriched every branch of knowledge that he came into contact.

When one speaks of any person it is a cliche to speak of his "qualities of head and heart"! Granted Lenin was a great man, a stupendous genius, was he also a "good" man? Enemies of communism have been sedulously painting him a "ruthless political robot"—a machine that has no heart, no human sentiments.

This is far from truth. While he was no doubt ruthless in dealing with enemies outside and inside the revolutionary

movement, he was at the same time the most humane person. In the difficult ascent to the October revolution, he had reluctantly to part with many a faintheart who stayed behind as sort of milestones on the path of progress. But he never harboured any personal enmity on account of political differences.

Time and again he was pained and anguished by the betrayal of many a long-standing colleague but he bore no grudge. Only one example will suffice. Trotsky had been his bitterest enemy from 1903 when he sided with Martov on the question of first para of party rules. In all periods since then, at all important turning points of the movement, Trotsky opposed Lenin tooth and nail. Still this is what he writes of Trotsky in his last *Testament*:

"Comrade Trotsky. . . is distinguished not only by his outstanding ability. He is personally perhaps the most capable man in the present CC. . ." He further said that Trotsky could not be blamed for his non-Bolshevism personally.

It requires a big heart to say all this. In his relations with ordinary workers, poor peasants, children, he was cordial, loving and understanding. That is why he is so popular. There are many monuments in stone and metal to his memory and many more will come up. But the most enduring are the Soviet Union and the world communist movement, and those in the heart of millions of grateful toiling people of the world.

This book is dedicated to this intellectual giant and humane person in grateful memory.

10 April 1970 M. B. RAO

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# LENIN

## Comrade and Man

HIREN MUKERJEE

There is, one learns, in the Moscow archives an album in which delegates to the Second Congress of the Communist International (1920) wrote their impressions of Lenin. "The most noble representative of humanity" is how a delegate from India is said to have pithily expressed there his view of the man. It is a pity that the identity of the delegate, which had to be strictly concealed in order to evade the tentacles of the then imperialist security, cannot yet be established. In any case, what he wrote in the album is the truth itself about the peerless man who came into this world a hundred years ago to shake and change it nearer the heart's desire of humanity.

The eminent British writer and encyclopaedist, H. G. Wells, who met and talked with Lenin in 1920, wrote after his second visit to the Soviet Union in 1934: "I grudge subscribing to the 'great man' conception in human affairs, but if we are going to talk at all of greatness among our species, then I must admit that Lenin at least was a very great man..." To H. G. Wells, Lenin was "a fresh kind of brain for me to

encounter", a man entrenched in hard-down revolutionary authority, endowed with incomparable personal prestige "based on his sound and lucid vision during the revolutionary crisis" and with "the strength of simplicity of purpose combined with subtlety of thought" (cf *Soviet Features*, Vol. VIII, No. 15, New Delhi, 29 January 1970). Even more apposite is what John Reed inscribed in the album mentioned earlier: "Lenin, simplest, most human, and yet most far-seeing and immovable" (see V. I. *Lenin*, Moscow, 1969, p. 175).

Very few, indeed, among the great men of history have had, like Lenin, a manysided but truly integrated personality, unified by a rare and intense coordination of feeling, thought and action. A lover of nature and of his fellowmen, he was at the same time deeply imbued with culture, with philosophical reflection and ceaseless scientific inquiry. The man of thought and of profound humanistic impulses, he was at the same time wholeheartedly involved in fundamental problems of politics and commanded stupendous organisational and tactical capacity. With his passionate conviction in the socialist revolution as the cure for the ills of mankind, the extraordinary combination of his talent and his experience as a dedicated revolutionary came to be fused, as it were, into a flaming unity of direction and of purpose. It was not merely the amalgam of a humanist, a thinker and a politician. A disciplined and dauntless involvement in the theory and practice of the socialist revolution brought out superbly, even as the trials and tribulations recurred, the quality of a man profoundly creative and in the truest sense benign.

If there is one man who symbolises the twentieth century it is Lenin. There has been no other personality in the annals of mankind whose teachings and whose work have brought about and continue still to bring about such a historic change, not only in the life of his own country but of all the world. It was Lenin's wisdom and insight and character which inspired and shaped the Communist Party, under whose leadership the heroic workers and peasants of the Soviet Union tackled the colossal task of building, against the most overwhelming

odds that the present generation often seems to forget, the world's first socialist state.

Was it, then, that in Lenin there appeared, almost providentially, a unique man with resplendent gifts and history took great strides as a result? Is it that the greatness, the strength and the influence of Lenin are to be accounted for by his possession of certain extraordinary personal qualities? Great men, however, do not emerge miraculously from the unknown to change the course of history. Hegel's classic formulation on this issue will be recalled by many:

> "The great man of the age is the one who can put into words the will of his age, tell his age what its will is, and accomplish it. What he does is the heart and essence of his age; he actualises his age" (*Philosophy of Right*, Eng. Trans., 1942, p. 295).

Lenin was no doubt a creator of history, a great man in the higher sense, so to speak, for he did not, like some big historical figures, ride to greatness on the crest of already existing trends but helped by his own original genius also to mould the trends which carried him to greatness. He was nonetheless the creature also of the history of his times. When we think of Lenin, we think also of the Russia of his day; his early experience of tsarist autocracy and the rising resistance against it; his brother's execution; his discovery of Karl Marx when he was eighteen; the Marxist group at Samara; his first groping steps in organisation; his arrest and exile; the *Iskra* phase; the Bolshevik party; 1905 and 1917; civil war and blockade and famine and foreign intervention; the building of the first socialist state, comprising a multitude of nationalities and a sixth of the globe; the Third International—in sum, a complicated and magnificent development to the making of which masses of men and women, mainly of Lenin's own Russia, contributed.

As Lenin once said: "... politics begin where millions of men and women are; where there are not thousands, but millions,

that is where serious politics begins" (*Selected Works*, 1967, Vol. 2, p. 584). It was with these millions that Lenin had his rapport. It was, following Marx and Engels, that Lenin articulated the needs of his people and of his age, helped most of all to light the glow of their zeal for revolution, threw himself heart and soul into the struggle to achieve their goals. In the last half century and more, that struggle has engulfed the globe, and if any one man is its embodiment, it is Lenin who epitomises its glory in his person and at the same time shares it with the millions involved in his crusade against iniquity.

In 1907, at the world Congress of the Second International at Stuttgart, Rosa Luxemburg had pointed Lenin out to Clara Zetkin with the remark: "Take a good look at him. That is Lenin. Look at the selfwilled, stubborn head. A real Russian peasant's head with a few faintly Asiatic lines. That man will try to remove mountains. Perhaps he will be crushed by them. But he will not yield" (Clara Zetkin, *Lenin—the Man*, p. 1). Lenin never yielded. He moved mountains, not by "faith" which is the biblical prescription for the operation but with a philosophy, a programme and a party which, following the scientific socialism of Marx and Engels, found strength and sustenance from the real and dynamic movement of masses of the people making history. As an American scholar, Howard L. Parsons, has recently put it: "Lenin was not merely a 'Marxist'. He *became* Marxism, he *became* the Russian revolution" (cf *Soviet Union*, Monthly, Moscow, No. 11, 1969).

Marxism was to Lenin "not a lifeless dogma, not a final, finished and readymade, immutable doctrine, but a living guide to action". It was thus that Lenin's work brought about an enrichment of the scientific and revolutionary achievement of Marx and Engels. It was thus that he came to organise and direct the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, to build the world's first socialist state and take on the role of the leader and teacher of the toiling people in every country. It was thus that the Second Congress of the Soviets meeting almost immediately after Lenin's death (21 January 1924) heard the statement, made in hushed tones but with an inner ring of pride, that

"there is nothing higher than the title of member of the party whose founder and leader was Comrade Lenin".

* * *

The world knows that Lenin was head and shoulders above Plekhanov, Martov, Axelrod and other colleagues in the leadership of the party which he had founded—"a mountain eagle who knew no fear in the struggle, and who boldly led the party forward along the unexplored paths of the Russian revolutionary movement". Physically a small man, spurning the cheap gimmicks of leadership, never, for example, coming late to meetings in order to impress expectant crowds, simple and modest and unassuming but endowed with the force of logic and of character—he was, in sum, "the new leader of the new masses, of the simple and ordinary masses, of the very 'rank and file' of humanity".

Let John Reed describe him as he looked on the morrow of the revolution and before a crowd nearly delirious with joy and hope. Lenin tried no frills of pompous oratory but spoke simple words, concluding with quiet determination: "We shall now proceed to construct the socialist order." Reed's description is very much worth quoting:

> "A short, stocky figure with a big head set down in his shoulders, bald and bulging. Little eyes, a snubbish nose, wide generous mouth, and heavy chin. Dressed in shabby clothes, his trousers much too long for him. Unimpressive, to be the idol of a mob, loved and revered as perhaps few leaders in history have been. A strange, popular leader—a leader purely by virtue of intellect: colourless, uncompromising and detached, without picturesque idiosyncrasies—but with the power of explaining profound ideas in simple terms, of analysing a concrete situation. And combined with shrewdness the greatest intellectual audacity..."

Before the revolution and even after it, when his authority was at its highest, Lenin had to encounter from time to time opposition on specific issues from his comrades, but patiently

and with the sternest resolution he overcame all obstacles. It is not possible to relate details, but it is clear how in crucial situations he emerged triumphant—never conceited in victory and never whining over defeat, strong in his fidelity to principle, impregnable because, as he said, "a policy of principle is the only correct policy". And what enabled Lenin most of all to grasp principle and apply it was his faith in the creative power of the masses and his constant readiness to learn from the masses, to scourge smug critics of the "chaos of revolution", to comprehend the elemental forces and direct their movement into the channel of the proletarian revolution.

It used to be said in Bolshevik circles that "Lenin swims in the tide of revolution like a fish in water". He was indeed the genius born, as it were, for revolution, combining in himself clarity of understanding and boldness of action in extraordinary measure. With unerring insight he chose, against powerful opposition, the moment of the uprising in November 1917 and in the difficult days that followed appealed to the soldiers over the head of the officers, calling upon the former to surround the generals, to terminate hostilities, and take the cause of peace in their own hands. None had, like Lenin, the brilliant insight and the ability to grasp and divine the inner meaning of impending events and to lay down the correct strategy and a clear line of advance at crucial moments of the revolution.

When in December 1937, the first elections on the basis of universal suffrage were held in the Soviet Union, Stalin, speaking as a candidate, asked his electors to require their deputies to try and be

> "political figures of the Lenin type... as clear and as merciless towards the enemies of the people as Lenin was... as free from all panic when things begin to get complicated and some danger or other looms on the horizon, as free from all semblance of panic as Lenin was... as wise and deliberate in deciding complex problems requiring a comprehensive orientation and a comprehensive weighing of pros and cons as Lenin was... as upright and honest as

> Lenin was...(and that they should) love their people as Lenin did..." (*Stalin on Lenin*, Moscow, 1946, p. 81).

There was no man more humane than Lenin, but where the interests of the revolution were concerned his spirit was fiery and implacable. The party was, in his eyes and in his own words, "the intelligence, the honour and the conscience of our times". In one of his letters, he wrote:

> "There it is, my fate. One fighting campaign after another —against political stupidities, philistinism, opportunism and so forth. It has been going on since 1893. And so has the hatred of the philistines on account of it. But still, I would not exchange this fate for 'peace with the philistines'."

It thus devolved on Lenin to cleanse, mercilessly, the Augean stables of the Second International. It was he who exposed how the Dans, the Martovs, the Adlers, the Bauers, the Scheidemanns, the Hilferdings, the Kautskys and even the Plekhanovs had degenerated to become in fact fighters for the crumbs that fell from the bourgeois table. It was a wrench for him to part from Martov and Dan, but he did not flinch. For Plekhanov he had once the liveliest respect, but he did not hesitate to part company. Kautsky was at one time the doyen of Marxists, but when Kautsky betrayed the working class and slandered the Soviet revolution, Lenin was literally aflame with anger and spent whole days till late in the night, writing that extraordinarily powerful book: *The Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky* (1918). Later, directing the Soviet state, through "war communism" to the New Economic Policy which was to enable advance towards socialist planning, Lenin was charged by some of his own comrades with reintroducing capitalism and betraying the revolution. It was then that he lashed his accusers in debate as "slaves of phrases", as romanticists who wished always to live in the highlights of melodrama—"the course of the revolution", he said memorably, "is not as straight as the Nevsky Prospekt".

In June 1917, when the Menshevik leader Tsereteli asserted

that no party in Russia was prepared to take over power, Lenin had said: "There is such a party!" It was this invincible confidence in the Bolshevik party and its link with the people that sustained the revolution. Lenin had no sectarian rigidity to begin with, and since certain strata of the peasantry, craftsmen and intelligentsia supported petty bourgeois parties, he permitted them to function and even included the "Leftwing Socialist Revolutionaries" in the first Soviet government. In June-July 1918, steps had to be taken against counter-revolutionary activities and exclude hostile elements from membership of the Soviets. Repeated plots against the life of Lenin and other heinous acts against the state made it clear, however, that the dictatorship of the proletariat had to be strengthened. If it was humanly possible, Lenin would have allowed the utmost rein to dissidents, but when treachery raised its ugly head again and again, Lenin and the party had to put it down implacably. Do not many of us recall Gorky's unforgettable words describing Lenin's love of music, particularly of Bach's Apassionata, which made him feel like gently stroking the heads of loved ones but he had to shake off the feeling and get ready for other tasks like the striking down of enemies at home and abroad, enemies of the revolution and of humankind?

* * *

Lenin had a rare human quality which set him apart from everyone else. It was, as a veteran communist Karpinsky once wrote, "his extraordinary thoughtfulness, responsiveness, tact, simplicity and modesty not only in his relations with his comrades—whether a member of the Central Committee or a rank and file party member—but with people in general, whether a celebrity or an office cleaner". He had, from every testimony, a natural magnetism which drew the hearts and sympathies of working people. The intellectual type often found him too singleminded—even Ilya Ehrenburg joked in 1913 about Lenin shutting his doors, so to speak, to whoever had not been inoculated with anti-Bogdanov serum! But the fishermen of Capri, as Gorky noted, warmed in a special way

to the Russian who spoke no Italian. Poles in Poronin where Lenin lived for some time and Finns near Lake Razliv, where the refugee stayed in a shanty among the bushes, not to speak of Russian workers who, even when "hungry, barefoot, ragged" would be ready "after hearing his stirring words to plunge straight into battle", all felt for him a special affinity.

Once A. A. Nikishin, a Baku oil worker, went together with other workers to meet Lenin. "We came out of the Kremlin", he wrote, "and began to compare notes. We had expected Vladimir Ilyich to speak of extraordinary things in extraordinary language. But he said the most ordinary things in the simplest language... After we had been with him for five minutes we felt like old friends and were completely at our ease." Another time, when some workers sent Lenin a letter and a gift of cloth, he wrote back, deeply moved: "I will tell you a secret that you ought not to send me any gifts. I earnestly request you to spread this secret among the workers as widely as possible." Lenin's last personal meeting with workers was two months before his death—they brought him a gift of cherry trees, embraced and kissed him. The last of them, an old man named Kuznetsov, held on to Lenin's arm and repeated through his tears: "I am a workman, Vladimir Ilyich, a hammersmith. We shall forge everything you told us to."

To the toiling people of his land, Lenin was "Our Ilyich". When the first electric lamps were switched on in the little village of Kishino near Moscow—*pace* Lenin's slogan about electrification *plus* Soviet power amounting to socialism—the people affectionately nicknamed them "Ilyich's lamps".

There is no end to episodes narrated by people of different countries that bring out the shining humanity that was in Lenin—the simplicity, the good cheer, the astonishing consideration for other people, deep truthfulness. Everyone knows how when, virtual ruler of "all the Russias", Lenin lived in the same near-ascetic conditions as he did during his exil either in Siberia or abroad. There are touching stories how Lenin cared when the people around him suffered for lack of food, of

protection against cold, of adequate clothing and fuel. Once a close associate, Alexander Dmitrievitch Tsurupa, Commissar of Provisions, fainted from hunger during a meeting in the difficult days of July 1918. Lenin insisted on his going to a sanatorium. "Dear A.D.", he wrote, "you are becoming quite impossible in dealing with public property. Prescription: three weeks' medical treatment. And obey Lidya Alexandrovna who will send you to a sanatorium. Really, it is unpardonable to neglect weak health. You must put yourself right. Greetings. Lenin."

There was nothing cold and abstract about this great man who drew life and strength from the toiling people. He wanted to, and did, draw workers and peasants into party, administrative and trade union activities. When deserters from the revolution were creating trouble and trying to make administration impossible, Lenin said it was time to scrap the bourgeois fiction that only the rich or an officialdom from the moneyed classes could govern the country. "Every cook", said Lenin in a memorable formulation, "must learn to rule the state". One day, when some factory workers who had been appointed to official posts asked Lenin for permission to go back to their old jobs because they could not cope with their tasks, Lenin rejoined: "I have never been at the head of a state either, but the party and the people entrusted this job to me and I have to justify their trust. I recommend that you do the same." It was the creative, yet difficult effort of the masses and their full participation which were to Lenin the basic factors in the construction of socialism.

"You are representatives of the Bolshevik party", Lenin repeatedly pointed out, "the people will judge the entire party by your behaviour. This binds you to set a good example everywhere and in everything." To his mind, collective leadership was important but there had to be strict personal responsibility for one's job. Any violation of party discipline was reprehensible, but Lenin was always sharply critical of all excesses of administrative zeal. Once he got an important official punished severely, for he "was inclined to be stupidly

bossy". He was himself the farthest removed from being a boss; could one imagine that once needing some books from the Rumyantsev Library (now Lenin Library) he wrote: "If, according to regulations, reference books cannot be borrowed, could I not be allowed to borrow for reference purposes some books for one evening, say a night, after the library has closed? *I would return them by the morning.*" (*The Letters of Lenin*, ed. E. Hill and D. Mudie, London, 1937, p. 461.) That "bossism", rudeness and other vices were deeply distasteful to him is clear in his "Testament" where the tallest of his colleagues are inflexibly dissected.

There was nothing chilling and formal about this wonderful man whose many-faceted personality has a warmth that comes out so well in the reminiscences of his friend Maxim Gorky and of his wife and comrade Krupskaya. Immersed in tasks of the revolution, he would write as often as possible to his "darling mother", and suddenly, as in a letter from Paris dated 25 March/7 April 1912, one would see a gem: "All the fruit trees in the gardens are in white blossom (as though milk had been poured over them), the perfume was wonderful." Speaking to Clara Zetkin, the German revolutionary, Lenin stressed repeatedly how millions of women must come forward to put socialism on a firm footing, discussed problems of the so-called new sexual life of the youth, expressed his distaste for the "glass of water" theory of love—"will the normal man in normal circumstances lie down in the gutter and drink out of a puddle or out of a glass with a rim greasy from many lips?" —spoke of the need for young people of the joy and strength of life and at the same time of "clarity, clarity and again clarity", for youth "must not and shall not forget, forget the shame, the filth, the savagery of capitalism", and reiterated that the revolution must win "the confidence of the masses of women who feel themselves exploited, enslaved, suppressed by the domination of the man, by the power of the employers, by the whole of bourgeois society".

It is amusing to note that at a sitting with Clara Zetkin, Lenin spoke on disregarding two knocks on the door, and

added laughingly, "You know, Clara, I shall make use of the fact that I was with a woman. I'll explain my lateness by reference to the wellknown feminine volubility. Although this time, it was the man and not the woman, who spoke such a lot" (Zetkin, *op. cit.*, p. 84). One is reminded of Lenin in exile in Italy joking with Gorky (which means "bitter") that "Mr Bitter" had a very sweet wife. It is good to know how the stupendous intellect and unswerving revolutionary could take childlike pleasure in the simplest things. "Only an honest man could laugh like that", an old Capri fisherman once told Gorky about Lenin.

* * *

It was the wide-ranging mind and understanding heart of Lenin that led him to the study not only of the problems of Russia and of Europe but also of the wide world beyond it. On this account he was drawn towards India and other countries subjected to imperialism. It was precisely because of this that we find him cordial and receptive even to people ideologically distant (and perhaps even irritating) like Mahendra Pratap and his companions, for the latter after all represented the freedom urge of their land. This was why he welcomed M. N. Roy into the Communist International and especially at its Second Congress (1920) helped him with his formulation regarding the colonial problem. This was why he wanted not only to pursue Indian studies himself to the extent possible, but also to get Soviet periodicals to print Indian work by such people as Abani Mukerjee and Virendranath Chattopadhyaya. It was entirely in keeping with his character that Lenin, while receiving Mahendra Pratap's delegation pointedly took aside its humble Indian attendant and spoke to him with animation and genuine interest about peasant life in India.

Chicherin once wrote:

> "In Vladimir Ilyich we have a truly inimitable representative of the proletarian culture, of a culture that was based on precise knowledge, on the rationality of all human work, in other words, on the supremacy of reason over

nature, of the socially regulated production over the blind elements."

Being a stranger to dogma and personal hauteur, he did not conceive of any other form of victory over a man who happened to disagree with him than as the triumph of his argument. A lover of literature, of music and the arts generally, he knew also the sensitive nature of certain problems as well as of individuals. Even in his "God-building" days, Gorky never found Lenin in his impatience hectoring him; on the contrary, Lenin slowly but surely won over the great writer to Marxism, a feat performed by no clever trickery but by a persistent and understanding approach. Lenin would never hesitate to say that art was to be for the masses, but when "Proletkult" enthusiasts were strident Lenin quietly remarked:

"There is no question but that in this matter it is absolutely necessary to secure great scope for personal initiative and individual tendencies, scope for thought and fantasy, scope for form and content."

Lenin himself was a scientist, in the line of Marx and Engels, and would often surprise specialists by his quick grasp of intricate matters. The range of his scientific interests was truly amazing, but even more was his solicitude for scientists. "From now on, the human mind and the human genius", he said in January 1918, "will never be turned into a means of violence, a means of exploitation." At his initiative there was set up during the dark days of the civil war and the intervention a commission, headed by Gorky, for the improvement of scientists' living conditions. Lenin's interest is seen in the letter he sent to the Petrograd Soviet: "Comrades, whenever Comrade Gorky approaches you on such problems please render him every assistance, and should any obstacles or objections arise, will you kindly inform me as to what they consist of?"

For Pavlov Lenin had profound respect. It was at Lenin's initiative that the great scientist was provided with all facilities for fruitful research at a time when money was scarce and

everything in short supply in Russia—a fact for which Pavlov, who had not expected such perceptiveness, conveyed his gratitude to Lenin. It was Lenin again, ever preoccupied with a million problems, who got the celebrated Indologist Oldenburg to go ahead with the work of the Academy of Sciences and give it a new orientation in keeping with the revolution. All this is no wonder, for Lenin was unique—a man, in Gorky's words, "who understands his role in this chaotic world—that of an enemy of chaos". "He put the same eagerness into a game of chess, into looking at the pictures in the 'History of Costumes', into arguing with comrades for hours on end, into fishing, walking along the sun-heated stony paths of Capri, and admiring the golden flowers of the genista or the dirtyfaced children of the fishermen."

There has never been a man who deserves to be remembered more than Lenin. Unending crowds go in to see him as his body rests in the mausoleum in Moscow's Red Square. Lenin himself was allergic to praise, sharply reprimanded personal adulation and would not have consented to his body being embalmed. Perhaps even he would have relented in his objection if he could see that the millions that come daily from the depths of the Soviet country to pay him homage ask for no miracle from a holy relic—they offer him, as it were, a symbolic embrace, with a real and stirring, if unusual, faith that each person passing through the vault was in some way a part of Lenin and a continuation of him.

And does not the great American Negro poet, Langston Hughes, remind us that Ivan the Russian, Chang from Shanghai and Chico the Negro "cutting cane in the sun" ask Lenin to let them sleep beside him after their lifetime of toil, and

> Comrade Lenin of Russia
> Rises in his marble tomb:
> *"On guard with the workers for ever!*
> *The world is our room!"*

# LENIN

# New Path for Happiness of Man

C. RAJESWARA RAO

The birth centenary of immortal Lenin is a happy occasion not only for communists and the toilers of the world but also for progressive mankind.

Lenin was a versatile genius, the most clearheaded Marxist theoretician, practical revolutionary, ardent leader of the masses—and at the same time, an embodiment of humanism, all rolled into a single individual—a rarity in nature.

Today, under Lenin's banner, over onethird of humanity has embraced socialism and the first socialist state, the Soviet Union, is building communism; a number of newly independent countries are advancing along the noncapitalist path of development towards socialism; the working class and other working people in the advanced capitalist countries are fighting to end capitalist rule and achieve socialism.

Lenin not only defended the revolutionary science of Marxism from distortions by the left and right opportunists, the bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideologues, but also developed it further in the new era of imperialism. His brilliant

revolutionary theories are aptly considered to be the Marxism of the epoch of imperialism and proletarian revolutions and the transformation of the world from capitalism to socialism. Hence this most advanced and revolutionary science is called Marxism-Leninism today.

He founded the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, later to become the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. He led the first successful socialist revolution; he built the first socialist state and he laid the foundation for the Communist International which continued his mission successfully afterwards.

## I

Lenin could perform this historic mission because of his exceptional qualities—deep understanding of the essence of the science of Marxism, unswerving faith in the historic role of the working class as the gravedigger of capitalism, arduous faith in the masses and their creativeness, clearheaded objective assessment of any concrete situation, indomitable courage, modesty, selflessness, flexibility in practical politics and intense humanism.

The following extract from Krupskaya's *Reminiscences of Lenin* vividly shows the exceptional qualities of Lenin:

> "The nine years of his second emigration had not changed Ilyich a bit. He worked just as hard and as methodically, he took the same keen interest in every little detail, was able to put two and two together and had lost none of his ability to see the truth and face it, no matter how bitter it was. He hated oppression and exploitation as cordially as ever, was just as devoted to the cause of the proletariat, the cause of the working people, and took their interests just as closely to heart. His whole life was bound up with that cause. It came naturally to him, he could not live in any other way. He fought opportunism and all and every backdown as passionately and sharply as ever. He was still capable of breaking with his closest friends if he saw them

acting as a drag on the movement; he would go up to yesterday's opponent in a simple comradely way, if it was essential to the cause, and say what he had to say frankly and bluntly as he had always done. He was just as fond of nature, of the spring woods, the mountain paths and lakes, the noise of the big cities, the working class crowd; he loved his comrades, movement, struggle, life in all its numerous facets" (pp. 7-8).

Every communist and revolutionary has to emulate and cultivate these qualities of Lenin if he has to devote his entire life to the cause of revolution and toiling masses.

## II

Lenin often used to repeat the famous saying of Marx and Engels, the founders of communism, "Our theory is not a dogma but a guide to action". All the same, some of their disciples like Kautsky, Otto Bauer and others attempted to make it into a dogma and prevented its development into an effective weapon of the revolutionary proletariat in an altogether new stage of capitalism reached at the beginning of the 20th century, the stage of imperialism, engulfing the entire world in its tentacles. They tried to make the conclusions of the founders of communism—that socialism would be established first in advanced capitalist countries like Great Britain, America and France, that it would be successful only if it is established in a number of countries at one time, that antifeudal, democratic revolutions would be led by the bourgeoisie and the proletariat has to help it so that favourable conditions for a socialist revolution are created—into unalterable dogmas. They even distorted the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a precondition for the building up of a socialist society.

Lenin lifted the science of Marxism from the morass into which the revisionist leaders of the Second International had landed it and creatively developed it into a revolutionary weapon of the proletariat in the stage of imperialism. While upholding the theories of dialectical and historical materialism,

the labour theory of value and surplus value, and the theory of dictatorship of the proletariat, Lenin boldly pointed out that some of the theoretical conclusions of Marx and Engels had become outdated and that new conclusions had to be drawn to suit the stage of imperialism. He boldly stated that it was not necessary that the socialist revolution should take place first in advanced capitalist countries. He predicted that the weakest link in the imperialist chain would break and that the socialist revolution could succeed, under the leadership of the working class, in a backward country like tsarist Russia. He also stated that socialism could be built in one country under certain favourable conditions, utilising the interimperialist contradictions.

Lenin also brought out a new postulate, that in the conditions of imperialism, the bourgeoisie cannot be expected to lead a thoroughgoing bourgeois democratic revolution because of fear of the proletariat taking over and pushing it towards a socialist revolution. Hence he called on the proletariat to lead the democratic revolution and take it over to the socialist stage. He said that there was no chinese wall between the democratic and the socialist stages of revolution in a country in the conditions of imperialism.

And Lenin's prophecy has come true.

History has proved that Lenin was right on all these points. Over onethird of humanity in 14 countries has gone over to socialism and a socialist world as opposed to the capitalist world has been created, taking the path blazed by Lenin. Many more countries are striving to take the path of Lenin. One can safely predict now that it will not be very long before imperialism is abolished and complete victory of socialism is ensured throughout the world.

It is very necessary to remember that Marxism-Leninism is "not a dogma but a guide to action" now, when some of the conclusions of Lenin like the inevitability of a world war are sought to be made into dogmas by some communist leaders like Mao Tse-tung ignoring the changed conditions in the period since the Second World War. The international communist

movement, in the conferences held in Moscow in 1957 and 1960, assessed the new situation in which a basic change in the correlation of class forces on a world scale had come about and predicted that a third world war can be prevented. It gave a call for saving humanity from a thermonuclear holocaust.

In this connection it is necessary to remember what Lenin said about the essence of the science of Marxism:

> "We do not regard Marx's theory as something completed and inviolable; on the contrary, we are convinced that it has only laid the foundation stone of the science which socialists *must* develop in all directions if they wish to keep pace with life. We think that an *independent* elaboration of Marx's theory is especially essential for Russian socialists; for this theory provides only general *guiding* principles, which, *in particular*, are applied in England differently than in France, in France differently than in Germany and in Germany differently than in Russia" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 4. pp. 211-12).

Lenin said that Marxism is "the theory of dialectical materialism that is able to encompass these contradictions of living reality, of the living history of capitalism and the working class movement". But one has to *learn to apply Marxist theory, in order to be able to master it.* Those who have not mastered this theory would "constantly exaggerate, elevate to a onesided theory, to a onesided system of tactics, now one or another feature of capitalist development..." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 16, pp. 348 & 349).

In the days between the February and the October (1917) revolutions in Russia, when some of the Bolshevik leaders like Kamenev objected to the slogan of advance towards a socialist revolution under the plea that the democratic stage of dictatorship of the workers and peasants had not yet been completed, Lenin chided them saying that life did not exactly fit into theoretical formulas. He made the following famous utterance:

> "It is essential to grasp the incontestable truth that a Marxist must take cognisance of real life, of the true facts of *reality*, and not cling to a theory of yesterday, which, like all

theories, at best only outlines the main and the general, only *comes near* to embracing life in all its complexity.

"Theory, my friend, is grey, but green is the eternal tree of life."

"To deal with the question of 'completion' of the bourgeois revolution *in the old way* is to sacrifice living Marxism to dead letter.

"According to the old way of thinking, the rule of the bourgeoisie could and should be *followed* by the rule of the proletariat and the peasantry, by their dictatorship.

"In real life, however, things have *already* turned out *differently*; there has been an extremely original, novel and unprecedented *interlacing of the one with the other.* We have side by side, existing together, simultaneously, *both* the rule of the bourgeoisie (the government of Lvov and Guchkov) *and* a revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, which is *voluntarily* ceding power to the bourgeoisie, voluntarily making itself an appendage of the bourgeoisie" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 24, pp. 45-46).

All his life Lenin fought unrelentingly against all sorts of distortions of Marxism both from the left as well as the right. He wrote to one of the Bolsheviks, Inessa Armand, in December 1916: "There it is, my fate. One fighting campaign after another—against political stupidities, philistinism, opportunism and so forth. It has been going on since 1893. And so has the hatred of philistines on account of it. But still, I would not exchange this fate for 'peace' with the philistines..." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 35, p. 259).

Not to try to find answers for everything in life from the writings of our great teachers Marx, Engels and Lenin, but try to apply the general theoretical propositions of dialectical and historical materialism to concrete reality—this is what every communist must do. It should be remembered that to master Marxism-Leninism, as Lenin said, one has to learn to apply it to the concrete problems of life and the movement.

## III

Lenin built the Bolshevik party on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism, organising the working class and other toiling masses of tsarist Russia into a revolutionary mass movement. He headed the Bolshevik party which successfully overthrew tsarist rule and led the socialist revolution. Lenin was the genius of revolution. He not only used to work out a clear perspective and strategy for every stage of the revolution but carefully assessed every concrete situation and correlation of class forces and forged slogans and forms of struggle suited to the particular situation. He was a master in the judicious combination of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary, legal and illegal, peaceful and revolutionary forms of mass struggle, for preserving, strengthening and taking forward the revolutionary mass movement towards its goal.

The history of the CPSU(B) abounds in such examples. In times of revolutionary situation he showed how to advance quickly at the head of the revolutionary mass wave; in times of defeat and reaction, i.e. after the 1905 revolution, he showed how to retreat and how best to preserve the revolutionary movement. He did not flinch a moment to discard an outdated tactical slogan or form of struggle. He did not hesitate to make a compromise if it helped the revolutionary movement. He never allowed false prestige to come in the way of accepting a mistake after it came to be known and correcting it immediately. He never got dizzy when he achieved success or lost heart in times of defeat. That was Lenin.

Citing the historic experience of how the Great October Socialist Revolution was achieved, Lenin compared it with the "difficult ascent" of a mountain:

> "Is it not like making a difficult ascent of an unexplored and hitherto inaccessible mountain and refusing in advance ever to move in zigzags, ever to retrace one's steps, or ever to abandon a course once selected, and to try others?" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 70).

In this connection he also stated how one has to utilise the "smallest rift" in the enemy camp and the "smallest opportunity" to win a temporary "mass ally" for the success of the revolution:

> "The more powerful enemy can be vanquished only by exerting the utmost effort, and by the most thorough, careful, attentive, skilful and *obligatory* use of any, even the smallest, rift between the enemies, any conflict of interests among the bourgeoisie of the various countries and among the various groups or types of bourgeoisie within the various countries, and also by taking advantage of any, even the smallest opportunity of winning a mass ally, even though this ally is temporary, vacillating, unstable, unreliable and conditional. Those who do not understand this reveal a failure to understand even the smallest grain of Marxism, of modern scientific socialism *in general*. Those who have not proved *in practice*, over a fairly considerable period of time and in fairly varied political situations, their ability to apply this truth in practice have not yet learned to help the revolutionary class in its struggle to emancipate all toiling humanity from the exploiters. And this applies equally to the period *before* and *after* the proletariat has won political power" (*Ibid.*, pp. 70-71).

With regard to the combination of different forms of struggle, Lenin said: "... in order to accomplish its task the revolutionary class must be able to master *all* forms or aspects of social activity without exception (completing after the capture of political power—sometimes at great risk and with very great danger—what it did not complete before the capture of power); second, that the revolutionary class must be prepared for the most rapid and brusque replacement of one form by another" (*Ibid.*, p. 96).

Regarding compromises he said: "Only those who are not sure of themselves can fear to enter into temporary alliances even with unreliable people: not a single political party could exist without such alliances" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 362). But one has to remember that if by such compromise one has

not to lose one's bearings and land in opportunism, one has to base oneself firmly on Marxism-Leninism and the revolutionary mass movement.

The short period between the February and the October revolutions of 1917 was a memorable period in which the genius of Lenin for revolutionary tactics stood out in bold relief. He advanced slogans and tactics in succession to suit such a fast changing situation in order to take the toiling masses forward towards the goal of a socialist revolution. In his April Theses Lenin put forward a clear perspective of socialist revolution and the strategy to be pursued in order to achieve that goal. The immediate tactical slogan to end dual power (i.e. of the Provisional Government under the leadership of the bourgeoisie and the Soviets of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies) and take full power, he advanced the slogan of "All Power to the Soviets!" He said that the bourgeoisie was so weak that if the Soviets assert and declare that all power was theirs, fullfledged state power would pass into their hands peacefully. Thus he envisaged a peaceful transfer of power into the hands of the proletariat allied with the toiling peasantry and the achievement of the socialist revolution without firing a shot. But the Soviets, at that time with a majority of Mensheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries and such other reformist accomplices of the bourgeoisie, would not allow this to happen. Within two months, on 3rd July, they helped the Provisional Government to fire on the Petrograd workers and soldiers who were demonstrating with the slogans of "All Power to the Soviets!", "Down with Capitalist Ministers!" and "Bread, Peace, Freedom!"

The Bolshevik party under the leadership of Lenin temporarily withdrew the slogan of all power to the Soviets, tried to win over the majority of the toiling peasantry and other poor to the side of the socialist revolution independently under its leadership. By the middle of September, the Bolsheviks got a majority in Petrograd as well as Moscow and the toiling peasantry and other poor were rapidly gravitating towards the positions of the Bolshevik party. Then the Bolshevik party again revived the slogan of all power to the Soviets and began

preparations for an insurrection. Step by step Lenin led the toiling masses of Russia to that position following his dictum: "Propaganda and agitation alone are not enough for an entire class, the broad masses of the working people, those oppressed by capital, to take up such a stand. For that, the *masses must have their own political experience.* Such is the fundamental law of all great revolutions..." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 93, emphasis added).

In this connection it is very appropriate to quote the famous passage of Lenin on what constitutes a revolutionary situation. It is not possible to give the whole idea in summary and hence it is given in full:

> "To the Marxist it is indisputable that a revolution is impossible without a revolutionary situation; furthermore, it is not every revolutionary situation that leads to revolution. What, generally speaking, are the symptoms of a revolutionary situation? We shall certainly not be mistaken if we indicate the following three major symptoms: 1) when it is impossible for the ruling classes to maintain their rule without any change; when there is a crisis, in one form or another, among the 'upper classes', a crisis in the policy of the ruling class, leading to a fissure through which the discontent and indignation of the oppressed classes burst forth. For a revolution to take place, it is usually insufficient for the 'lower classes not to want' to live in the old way; it is also necessary that 'the upper classes should be unable' to live in the old way; 2) when the suffering and want of the oppressed classes have grown more acute than usual; 3) when, as a consequence of the above causes, there is a considerable increase in the activity of the masses, who uncomplainingly allow themselves to be robbed in 'peace time', but, in turbulent times, are drawn both by all the circumstances of the crisis *and by the 'upper classes' themselves* into independent historical action.
>
> "Without these objective changes, which are independent of the will, not only of individual groups and parties

but even of individual classes, a revolution, as a general rule, is impossible. The totality of all these objective changes is called a revolutionary situation" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 21, pp. 213-14).

Lenin further emphasised that, for a revolutionary situation to turn into a revolution, these objective factors must be accompanied by a subjective factor—the ability and readiness of the revolutionary classes to carry out revolutionary mass actions strong enough to overthrow the old government and establish their own. Only concrete historical conditions in a given country could produce this coincidence of objective prerequisites, Lenin believed. There was no such thing as introducing revolution from "without".

On the organisation of insurrection, Lenin pointed out "armed uprising is a *special* form of political struggle, one subject to special laws" and stated the basic rules of insurrection formulated by Marx and Engels, in his famous letter "Advice of an Onlooker" on October 8:

"(1) *Never play* with insurrection, but when beginning it realise firmly that you must *go all the way.*

(2) Concentrate *a great superiority of forces* at the decisive point and at the decisive moment, otherwise the enemy, who has the advantage of better preparation and organisation, will destroy the insurgents.

(3) Once the insurrection has begun, you must act with the greatest *determination*, and by all means, without fail, take the *offensive.* 'The defensive is the death of every armed rising.'

(4) You must try to take the enemy by surprise and seize the moment when his forces are scattered.

(5) You must strive for *daily* successes, however small (one might say hourly, if it is the case of one town), and at all costs retain *'moral superiority'* " (*Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 180).

On the basis of these basic rules of insurrection, he gave

specific directions for capturing Petrograd, the capital of Russia at that time.

He warned the Central Committee of the Bolshevik party on 24 October 1917, the night previous to the insurrection that any delay would be fatal. He wrote:

> "I am writing these lines on the evening of 24th. The situation is critical in the extreme. In fact it is now absolutely clear that to delay the uprising would be fatal.
>
> "With all my might I urge comrades to realise that everything now hangs by a thread; that we are confronted by problems which are not to be solved by conferences or congresses (even congresses of Soviets), but exclusively by peoples, by the masses, by the struggle of the armed people... We must at all costs, this very evening, this very night, arrest the government, having first disarmed the officer cadets (defeating them, if they resist), and so on... History will not forgive revolutionaries for procrastinating when they could be victorious today (and they certainly will be victorious today), while they risk losing much tomorrow, in fact, they risk losing everything" (*Ibid.*, p. 234).

After the success of the October Revolution, Lenin laid the foundations for the Soviet state, got the All-Russia Congress of Soviets to enact the decrees on peace, land, national selfdetermination of oppressed nations in tsarist Russia and others. By a masterly tactic, he proved in practice before the whole toiling people that the Constituent Assembly dominated by the bourgeoisie and their hangerson was a reactionary body, first by allowing it to meet and oppose all the revolutionary decrees the Soviets had adopted, and then by dissolving it. By another masterly stroke he utilised the contradictions among the imperialists and concluded the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the German imperialists to get the much needed respite for defeating the counterrevolutionary forces who very soon launched a civil war in the country, and the imperialists who resorted to military intervention.

How could Lenin accomplish this miracle? As he said: "Victory belongs only to those who have faith in the people, those who are *immersed in the lifegiving spring of popular creativity*" (emphasis added).

Lenin always had great esteem for the creative activity of the people and modestly learned from them. One among many of such examples is the creation of the Soviets, a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The toiling masses of tsarist Russia threw up this form in the 1905 revolution. Lenin took it over.

Lenin said: "Socialism cannot be decreed from above. Its spirit rejects the mechanical bureaucratic approach; living creative socialism is the product of the masses."

At the same time Lenin also emphasised the need for leadership and criticised those who contraposed the masses and leaders. He said: "Political parties, as a general rule, are directed by more or less stable groups composed of the most authoritative, influential and experienced members who are elected to the responsible positions and are called leaders."

## IV

Every communist and revolutionary has to cultivate the personal qualities of the Great Lenin, his modesty, simple living, levelheadedness, etc. He used to mix among ordinary people and was unassuming in his talk and behaviour with them. They used to say, "He is one among us."

Stalin spoke about his unassuming nature when he first met him in 1905 at the Bolshevik Conference in Finland, thus:

> "I was hoping to see the mountain eagle of our party, the great man, great not only politically, but, if you will, physically, because in my imagination I pictured Lenin as a giant, stately and imposing. What, then, was my disappointment to see a most ordinary looking man, below average height, in no way, literally in no way, distinguishable from ordinary mortals...

"It is accepted as the usual thing for a 'great man' to come late to meetings so that the assembly may await his appearance, with bated breath; and then, just before the 'great man' enters, the warning whisper goes up: 'Hush!... Silence!... He's coming.' This ritual did not seem to me superfluous, because it creates an impression, inspires respect. What, then, was my disappointment to learn that Lenin had arrived at the conference before the delegates, had settled himself somewhere in a corner, and was unassumingly carrying on a conversation, a most ordinary conversation with the most ordinary delegates at the conference. I will not conceal from you that at that time this seemed to me to be rather a violation of certain essential rules.

"Only later did I relise that this simplicity and modesty, this striving to remain unobserved, or, at least, not to make himself conspicuous and not to emphasise his high position, this feature was one of Lenin's strongest points as the new leader of the new masses, of the simple and ordinary masses, of the 'rank and file' of humanity" (*Works*, Vol. 6, p. 56).

Gorky, Lenin's lifelong friend and colleague, spoke of Lenin as follows:

"A man of astounding strength of will, Lenin possessed in the highest degree the best qualities and properties of the revolutionary intelligentsia—selfdiscipline often amounting to selftorture and selfmutilation, in its most extreme form, to a renunciation of art, to the logic of one of the heroes of L. Andreyev: 'Other people are living hard lives, and therefore, I must live a hard life.'

"In the hard famine year of 1919 Lenin was ashamed to eat the food which was sent to him by comrades, soldiers and peasants from the provinces. When the parcels came to his bleak flat he would frown, grow embarrassed, and hasten to give the flour, sugar and butter to the sick comrades or those who were weak through lack of food..." (*Days with Lenin*, p. 34).

Lenin never liked to live with upper sections of society. He liked to live with the ordinary people. Krupskaya narrates one such incident when they were in exile in Switzerland:

> "We had very little money, and lived mostly on cold food such as eggs and cheese, washed down with wine or water from a spring; we rarely had a proper dinner. At one little inn patronised by Social-Democrats a worker gave us a good tip. 'Don't dine with the tourists, but with the coachmen, chauffeurs and labourers—it's twice as cheap and more filling.' We took his advice. The civil servants and shopkeepers who ape the bourgeoisie would sooner stop going out altogether than sit down at the same table with a servant. This middle class snobbery is very widespread in Europe. They talk a lot about democracy there, but to sit down at the same table with the servants—not at home, but in a smart hotel—is more than any snob trying to make his way in the world can stomach. It gave Vladimir Ilyich special pleasure, therefore, to sit down in the common room to have his meal. He ate there with a keener relish and was full of praise for the cheap but satisfying food" (*Reminiscences of Lenin*, p. 106).

Krupskaya narrates another incident when Lenin refused to accept favoured living conditions offered to him:

> "Ilyich got very angry when any attempts were made to create favoured living conditions for him, pay him a big salary and so forth. I remember how angry he was over a pail of *khalva*, which Malkov, then commandant of the Kremlin, once brought him.
>
> "On May 23, Ilyich wrote a note to Bonch-Bruyevich:
>
> 'V. D. Bonch-Bruyevich,
> Business-Manager,
> Council of People's Commissars
>
> In view of nonfulfilment by you of my insistent demand to notify me on what grounds my salary was raised from

500 to 800 roubles per month as from 1 March 1918, and in view of the obvious illegality of such a rise, which you have made arbitrarily by arrangement with the Secretary of the Council N. P. Gorbunov, in direct violation of the decree of the Council of People's Commissars dated 23 November 1917, I herewith severely reprimand you.

Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars,
V. Ulyanov (Lenin)' "
(*Ibid.*, pp. 472-73)

Lenin hated gossip and scandalmongering. He kept away from such things which were very common among exiles in those days because of their hard life and isolation from the mass movement. Krupskaya says:

" 'There is nothing worse than these exile scandals', he said. 'They get people terribly worked up. These Old Men have bad enough nerves as it is after what they've been through, and all the convict prisons they've been in. We mustn't let ourselves get mixed up in such scandals—we have all our work ahead of us, we mustn't waste ourselves on such affairs' " (*Ibid.*, p. 44).

Lenin hated the cult of personality. He could not stand adulation of his personality and absented himself from such occasions. Lenin objected strongly to any adulation of his own personality, to praise of his services and was always annoyed to see such things. A. Lunacharsky relates how in September 1918 Lenin summoned a few leading comrades and told them roughly the following:

"I note with deep dissatisfaction that my person is being glorified. This is annoying and harmful. All of us know that personalities have nothing to do with it. It would be awkward for myself to prohibit that sort of thing. There would also be something ridiculous and pretentious about it. It is up to you to put the brakes on unobtrusively."

In 1920 the commission collecting material on the history of the RCP(B) and the October Revolution decided to begin collecting exhibits for a Lenin Museum. Lenin categorically forbade this and told Olminsky, who had reported the decision to him: "You can't imagine how unpleasant I find the constant promotion of my personality."

Though Lenin held a very high position in the party he never violated party discipline. There were some occasions when he found himself in a minority in the Central Committee. Still he submitted to the majority decision. One such famous occasion was Lenin's proposal for a separate peace with imperial Germany, conceding some territory with the object of getting a respite to set the house in order, for saving the young socialist state. This was not accepted by the majority of the Central Committee. Lenin waited. After a few days, when the Central Committee realised that Lenin was right, the Brest-Litovsk Treaty with imperial Germany was concluded—this time with the loss of more territory.

Though he was an outstanding intellectual, Lenin upheld the dignity of labour. In the hard days after the October Revolution, when the subotniki (voluntary labour) movement started, Lenin also participated in that movement in the Kremlin along with other labourers.

While doing unending mental work he used to keep himself fit through regular exercise and he maintained a strong physique. G. M. Krzhizhanovsky recollects the days of exile in Shushenskoye: "Lenin was a great lover of clean frosty air, brisk walking, ice skating, chess and hunting." Lenin went in for sports a good deal. He attached great importance to physical exercise, and believed that a revolutionary whose life was dedicated to struggle and was full of hardships and adversities should be physically fit, strong and tough.

Lenin had another quality, i.e., keeping his head cool and taking quick and correct decisions on critical occasions. Stalin relates one such memorable incident:

"It was in the first days of the October Revolution, when

the Council of People's Commissars was trying to compel General Dukhonin, the mutinous Commander-in-Chief, to terminate hostilities and to open negotiations for an armistice with the Germans. I recall that Lenin, Krylenko (the future Commander-in-Chief) and I went to General Staff Headquarters in Petrograd to negotiate with Dukhonin over the direct wire. It was a ghastly moment. Dukhonin and Field Headquarters categorically refused to obey the order of the Council of People's Commissars. The army officers were completely under the sway of Field Headquarters. As for the soldiers, no one could tell what this army of twelve million would say, subordinated as it was to the socalled army organisations, which were hostile to the Soviet power. In Petrograd itself, as we know, a mutiny of the military cadets was brewing. Furthermore, Kerensky was marching on Petrograd. I recall that after a pause at the direct wire, Lenin's face suddenly shone with an extraordinary light. Clearly he had arrived at a decision. 'Let's go to the wireless station', he said, 'it will stand us in good stead. We shall issue a special order dismissing General Dukhonin, appoint Comrade Krylenko Commander-in-Chief in his place and appeal to the soldiers over the heads of the officers, calling upon them to surround the generals, to cease hostilities, to establish contact with the Austro-German soldiers and take the cause of peace into their own hands.'

"This was 'a leap in the dark'. But Lenin did not shrink from this 'leap'; on the contrary, he made it eagerly, for he knew that the army wanted peace and would win peace, sweeping every obstacle from its path; he knew that this method of establishing peace was bound to have its effect on the Austro-German soldiers and would give full rein to the yearning for peace on every front without exception.

"We know that here, too, Lenin's revolutionary foresight was subsequently confirmed with the utmost exactness" (*Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 65-66).

Here is another incident when he was shot at by Fanny Kaplan, a Socialist Revolutionary. Lenin's life hung on a thread. One of the bullets had lodged in his left shoulder and the other perforated the top of his left lung. He lost much blood and his pulse was very weak. The heart was somewhat displaced and there was danger of blood poisoning. The doctors were trying to save his life. Lenin himself remained cool. He reassured his relatives, comrades and doctors. He kept saying, with a smile: "It's all right. This sort of a thing can happen to any revolutionary."

Such were the sterling personal qualities of immortal Lenin to be cultivated by every communist and revolutionary.

A misconception is sedulously spread by the enemies of communism that communism and humanism are incompatible. The glowing life of Lenin is a living example to show that communism is the best form of humanism. Lenin was ruthless and uncompromising when it came to the question of saving the young Soviet state but he was extremely human otherwise. He was against shedding any blood unnecessarily. He did not stand for violence for violence's sake. He tried very seriously for a peaceful socialist revolution between April and July 1917, when such an opportunity arose, if the Soviets were prepared to take the initiative. But that could not take place because of the majority which the hangerson of the bourgeoisie, the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, commanded in the Soviets at that time. Then he prepared seriously for an armed uprising. The October Revolution was successful with the least bloodshed. But the world imperialists and counterrevolutionaries invaded Russia, forced a civil war on the young Soviet state in an effort to wipe it off from the earth so that it may not act as the beaconlight for the toilers of the world. Much blood was shed in the civil war that followed. But the responsibility for this lay with the imperialists and the counterrevolutionaries. In such a situation Lenin was for suppressing the counterrevolution ruthlessly; but immediately after the civil war was over Lenin did not lose time in abolishing the special decrees

on suppression and establishing normal laws in the running of the state machinery.

Lenin's life and his writings are a treasurehouse of wisdom. The more one reads Lenin and ponders over and practises his teachings, the more one becomes wiser.

Lenin not only led the socialist revolution and laid the foundation for socialism in the Soviet Union. He also laid the foundation of the Communist International, under whose banner the communist movement spread to the four corners of the world. Today over onethird of humanity in 14 countries has embraced socialism. Many newly independent countries are trying to take the path of socialism blazed by Lenin. The communist movement has grown strong in many countries which are yet in the orbit of world capitalism. It will not be very long before socialism, the happy social order for the entire humanity, is established in the rest of the world and the dream of Great Lenin is realised.

For the realisation of Lenin's dream of world socialism, a great deal depends on us, communists, socialists and other progressives in India.

On this happy occasion of Lenin's birth centenary, let us remember what he said in his last Testament just before his death:

> "In the last analysis, the outcome of the struggle will be determined by the fact that Russia, India, China, etc. account for the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe. And during the past few years it is this majority that has been drawn into the struggle for emancipation with extraordinary rapidity, so that in this respect there cannot be the slightest doubt what the final outcome of the world struggle will be. In this sense, the complete victory of socialism is fully and absolutely assured" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 500).

The final outcome in the world struggle for socialism depends mainly on the Soviet Union, China and India. The Soviet Union

is building fullfledged communist society today. We have to carry out our responsibility in India.

On this great birth centenary of Lenin, let us take the pledge that we will leave no stone unturned in achieving the socialist order in India.

Long live the Immortal Memory of Lenin, the beaconlight of toilers of the world and enlightened humanity!

28 *January* 1970

LENIN

# Guidelines to Assess Agrarian Relations in India

BHOWANI SEN

## I

Lenin's contribution to Marxism illumines the path of peasant movement in the backward colonies and semicolonies. When Lenin was developing the science (of which Marx and Engels were the pioneers) towards the end of the 19th century and in the beginning of the twentieth, Indian peasants or the rural poor were suffering under British domination. Earlier, Digby and Ganesh Deuskar had unearthed the basic economic data about inhuman British exploitation, while Romesh Chandra Dutt in his two volumes of *The Economic History of India* presented a comprehensive study of the appalling conditions of the people living in India's countryside.

It was then customary to equate the peasantry and the rural poor with the general concept of "people" in the countryside; class concepts and the stages of social history were not yet understood. Marx's observations on India's village communities and the zamindari and ryotwari systems were yet

unknown in this country. The peasant masses were generally looked upon as the "dumb millions" after the Indigo revolt and Santhal rebellions, etc. were crushed.

Even when the Indian National Congress had undergone a radical transformation under Gandhi's leadership, the new Congress could not have a proper understanding of the phenomena of agrarian classes and their relation with the social economy. But that was the time, immediately after the First World War, when the October Socialist Revolution in Russia under the leadership of Lenin and the Leninist Bolshevik party had already initiated a new epoch in the history of mankind. Since then Lenin's immortal ideas on the peasant question and the role of the rural poor began to cross the Indian borders and produce its impact on Indian intellect, thereby setting in motion new forces heralding the emergence of a new peasant movement. The birth of the Workers' and Peasants' Party of India in the midtwenties and the radical agrarian movement that began in this period bore the first imprint of Lenin's ideas on these questions. From his Russian experience, and his observation of the anti-imperialist movements of the world, Lenin had arrived at scientific generalisations about the agrarian movements, the stages of development of agriculture and their relation with the working class revolutionary struggle for socialism.

## II

Before Lenin's ideas became accessible to the Indian anti-imperialist fighters, nothing but British rule and its exploitation in general were vaguely formulated, though the oppression of the landlords was not altogether unnoticed. Lack of freedom and indignities and misfortunes of the peasantry, particularly the extreme social inequality and barbarous injustice suffered by the scheduled castes which still continue, were not comprehended as the peculiarities of a historically outmoded social stage sought to be stabilised by the imperialists as their main props. Landlords were identified as a social class and as an ally of the foreign imperialists, only after Lenin's ideas

developing the ideas of Marx and Engels became known and studied in relation to Indian conditions.

Today the phrase "remnants of feudalism in land relations" is very commonly used and it is officially recognised that independent India inherited from British rule "remnants of feudalism" which are sought to be liquidated (though in vain) through a number of agrarian measures.

Feudalism existed in different forms in different parts of the world. Lenin explained Russian serfdom (before the Reform of 1861) in the following terms:

> "Under the serfowning system the peasant could not marry without the landlord's permission...(The peasant) had unfailingly to work for his landlord on days fixed by the latter's bailiff...The peasant could not leave his village without the landlord's permission" (*To The Rural Poor*, 1967, p. 7).

Pointing out that the remnants of this serfdom still prevailed in Russia after the Reform of 1861, Lenin described post-reform in "The Agrarian Programme of Social-Democracy in the First Russian Revolution, 1905-7" in the following terms:

> "Ten and a half million peasant households in European Russia possess together 75,000,000 dessiatins of land. Thirty thousand, chiefly noble, but partly also upstart, landlords each own above 500 dessiatins—a total of 70,000,000 dessiatins...Such are the main reasons for the predominance of feudal landlords in the agricultural system of Russia and, consequently, in the Russian state generally, and in the whole of Russian life. The owners of latifundia are feudal landlords in the economic sense of the term; the basis of their landownership was created by the history of serfdom, by the history of landgrabbing by the nobility throughout the centuries. The basis of their present methods of farming is the labour rent system, i.e., a direct survival of serf labour; it implies the cultivation of land with the implements of the small tillers in an endless variety of ways: winter hiring, annual leases, sharecropping on a

50 per cent basis, a labour rent, bondage for debt, bondage for cutoff lands, for the use of forests, meadows, water and so on and so forth ad infinitum" (*Alliance of the Working Class and the Peasantry*, 1959, p. 166).

We have quoted Lenin at length because simple definitions like the "exploitation through noneconomic compulsion by virtue of private ownership in land" does not make the picture about feudal property relations and the feudal mode of exploitation easily understandable to the layman. In the above description Lenin has precisely described in what numerous concrete forms the feudal mode of exploitation existed in Russia and did exist or does exist in various parts of the world.

This description will remind the reader of similar conditions prevailing under British rule and still existing in many parts of the country among various strata of the agricultural population. The actual tiller of the soil having no right in land, the rent having no economic basis, being merely extortion by virtue of land monopoly, sharecropping, begar (i.e. unpaid labour and forced labour too), etc. existed on a very wide scale under British rule, though modified from time to time through tenancy acts as a result of peasant movements or agrarian unrest. But the days of that medieval exploitation are not yet over, remnants still persist, even after national independence was achieved in 1947, the republic proclaimed in 1950 and the land reforms introduced since 1955.

The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes still suffer lack of civic freedom due to untouchability, debt slavery and forced labour in many forms in many parts of the country. Once upon a time these indignities were shared by all sections of the rural poor but even during British rule piecemeal and gradual changes had taken place. Yet they are still imposed on the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Untouchability in the most barbarous form still continues in many parts of the country. Members of the untouchable castes are being brutally killed. Laws enacted for abolition of untouchability are

inoperative. Most of the people belonging to the scheduled castes are agricultural labourers without land, without even a homestead. They are much more oppressed than other agricultural workers.

The conditions of the tribal people deserve special attention. Laws enacted for preservation of land belonging to the tribals remain, in most cases, unimplemented, particularly in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Tripura and Orissa. Tribal people's economy is dominated by moneylenders who continue to grab their land by utilising the helplessness of the indebted tribals.

Remnants of the feudal mode of exploitation continue to exist because the rural poor suffer terribly from unemployment and there is a new type of unemployment reflecting the growth of capitalist relations of production. Every year the number of the country's total unemployed swells by a few millions. The draft Fourth Five Year Plan provides for an additional employment to 15 million people, while the number of unemployed will rise in the plan period to 21 million; and this plan itself will be starting with a backlog of 27 million unemployed. Thus even if the target of the Fourth Plan is achieved, the total figure of unemployed will rise to 33 million at the close of the plan period. According to the census of 1961, 69.5 per cent of the total working population consists of agricultural classes (including agricultural labourers) and 20 per cent of them belong to the category of "disguised" unemployed. It adds another 26 million to the above 33 million unemployed. This abundance of unemployed labour is a source of strength for the perpetuation of semifeudal land relations in agriculture, though it is, at the same time, the basis for capitalist development by expanding the labour market. The types of relations of production are thus interwoven, producing the same miserable conditions of the rural poor.

## III

Remnants of feudalism became particularly curbed after the achievement of national independence under congress rule. The declared policy of the government has been as follows:

1) Abolition of the zamindari and other intermediaries between the state and the peasant.

2) Reform of the tenancy system, including

(i) fixation of rent;

(ii) ceiling on landholdings;

(iii) distribution of surplus land, available by fixation of ceilings, to the landless;

(iv) consolidation of holdings and service cooperatives.

Laws have been enacted by abolishing intermediary tenures (with huge compensation) and thereby 20 million tenants have been brought directly under the state. In 1961 nonryotwari tenures (i.e. intermediaries) constituted less than 2.75 per cent of the total households owning or holding land in the states.

Out of 42,450,000 acres of cultivable wasteland, barely 10 million acres have been distributed to the landless agricultural labourers.

In Uttar Pradesh, legal safeguards have been provided for declaring all tenancies nonresumable by the owners, except in cases of persons suffering from disability. In respect of tenants and sharecroppers, in West Bengal, certain vague and ineffective legal safeguards have been provided against evictions. In other states resumption has been expressly permitted under certain conditions. It is only in Kerala that under the United Front government cultivating tenants have been proclaimed outright owners of the plots in their cultivating possession.

Rents have been regulated in all the states by legislation. It is statutorily fixed as onesixth of the produce in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Delhi, Goa, Dadra and Nagar Haveli. It is onefourth of the produce in Assam, Bihar, Kerala, Mysore, Orissa, Telengana area of Andhra Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura and some union territories. The statutory rents are higher in Andhra Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Tamilnadu, Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and West Bengal. In Delhi, Manipur and Tripura rents of tenants are limited to four times the land revenue paid by the owners.

Rents are of three kinds—labour rent, produce rent and

money rent. The last one is, according to Marx and Lenin, the "dissolving" form of feudal rent. In India, even after the reforms, money rent is not yet made universal, while labour rent (begar), i.e., unpaid labour on a certain plot of landlord's land as the rent for the area leased to the tenant, still prevails in certain areas, in the case of certain sections of the tillers of the soil. What the sharecroppers pay is produce rent, it is also "pure feudal" rent, while elements of capitalist ground rent have penetrated into the money rents paid by protected tenants whose rents are regulated by law. The laws now compel the landowners to issue receipts for payment of rent, a practice which did not exist before in the case of the lowest ladder of tenants. But the majority of the landholding peasants pay land revenue to the state and no rent to any landlords.

In terms of the provision for the distribution of surplus land to the landless and of the goal to make the tenants landowners, about 3 million tenants and sharecroppers have acquired ownership over 2 million acres of surplus land and about half of it has been distributed by the governments concerned.

Some progress has been made in respect of consolidation of holdings in certain states. Thirty million acres have been consolidated. Now the target of the draft Fourth Plan is 43 million acres.

Abolition of intermediaries, consolidation of holdings, reduction of rents, fixity of tenures, etc. are certain means to pave the way for capitalist development in agriculture in place of the remnants of feudalism. The path of compromise followed by the Congress, reflecting the bankruptcy of capitalism at the present juncture of history, has not been able completely to eliminate the stranglehold of the survivals of semifeudal land relations, though they have been curbed and loosened.

Leasing of land proceeds in two ways—leasing by poor peasants to well to do peasants who cultivate the land by employing hired labour, as well as leasing to poor peasants by rich landowners at exorbitant rents. The latter alone is to be enlisted as the remnant of semifeudal relations. They cover the majority of tenancies. This is confirmed by the fact that

about 82 per cent of all tenants (tenancies may be open or hidden) do not enjoy any security of tenure. They are very prevalent in the following states: Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Tamilnadu, Bihar, Punjab, Haryana and West Bengal.

The new agrarian measures of the congress government have been accompanied by and even led to mass evictions. There are 3 types of such cases: (1) Evictions due to loopholes in the legislation permitting resumption by the landowners for "personal cultivation" (while the phrase personal cultivation has been so defined as to become useless to check semifeudal subletting); (2) forceful evictions by deceiving the law; and (3) land transfers to deceive the ceilings—transfers leading to ejectments of sharecroppers, etc.

A distinguished professor has correctly described statutory "personal cultivation" in the following words:

> "Neither manual work nor year round residence near the land was required; nor was the requisite amount of supervisory activity by the landlords clearly stipulated. In nearly all states 'land under personal cultivation' could thus continue to be cultivated by sharecroppers, if necessary disguised as agricultural workers. It is not surprising that the preparation and passage of the bills (land laws) brought a wave of eviction of tenants and a resumption of land for socalled personal cultivation."

In several states, evictions of tenants and sharecroppers have taken place on a very large scale, under the guise of "voluntary surrenders". These evictions have produced mixed and complex social phenomena. It has partly expanded the capitalist mode of production, the chief feature of which is, as Lenin pointed out, cultivation by employment of wage labour, with the implements and other capital resources supplied by the owner, provided it is production for the market, i.e., for sale. Partly, these evictions have also led to the reemergence of the feudal mode of cultivation (sharecropping, etc.) in a disguised way.

Professor Gunnar Myrdal has given a vivid description of

the process, how by circumventing the laws, many landlords have frustrated the implementation of whatever objectives were set forth in the agrarian legislations. He says:

> "A report on the Hyderabad Act of 1951 revealed that up to 1958 no less than twothirds of the protected tenants have been evicted, legally or illegally, and only 12 per cent had managed to fulfil the intent of the law by becoming owner cultivators. Even more shocking was the report on the Bombay Tenancy Act, because prior to its publication in 1958, the Bombay state was usually regarded as having the best tenancy legislation in the whole of South Asia. According to the report, in the five years from 1947-48 to 1952-53, the ratio of protected tenants to the total number of tenants had declined from more than 60 per cent to little more than 40 per cent" (*Asian Drama*, Vol. II, pp. 1307-8).

Rural indebtedness is on the increase because most of the peasant households continue to possess uneconomic holdings and, therefore, suffer from the lack of investible surplus. Inadequacy of credit facilities is mainly responsible for this state of affairs. In spite of banking and cooperative credit facilities now extended to the rural people, the vast mass of the poor peasants with tiny holdings are yet neglected. After the nationalisation of the banks, some new propositions are being formulated in the official quarters in order to regard labour and not land as the criterion of "creditworthiness". But the class structure in the rural areas is such that without a radical change in the government and the state apparatus, no new policy will be effective. Of course, some piecemeal progress can certainly take place.

The middle and poor peasants continue to be cheated through the market, as wholesale trade is in the grip of the big monopolies; peasants who produce for the market are to sell cheaper than the reasonable price while industrial goods are too dear for them. The continuously rising tide of the price level of all goods ultimately hits the middle peasant

and the rural poor more than anybody else. Such is the hold of the monopolies over the market that in spite of the rise in the production of industrial goods by about 6 per cent in 1969, the index of wholesale prices has risen by 11.1 per cent.

Finally, India has remained the land of small holdings so that both in her semifeudal as well as the capitalist sectors small peasant economy predominates, and small farming is a hindrance to agricultural progress.

Between the 8th Round of National Sample Survey and the 17th Round (i.e., between 1953-54 and 1959-61) the change in respect of small and scattered holdings is negligible. In 1952-53, 60 per cent of the holdings and 25.44 per cent of the cultivated area were below 5 acres. The corresponding figures for 1959-61 are 61.69 per cent and 19.18 per cent respectively. Those below 10 acres have increased from 79.73 per cent to 81.49 per cent in case of the number of holdings and from 34 per cent to 39.88 per cent in case of the cultivated area.

These figures, of course, indicate some "consolidation of holdings" (at the cost of poor peasants, of course) but yet the change is so small that the small peasant character of the agrarian economy remains almost the same.

The following table reveals the comparative estimates between 1953-54 and 1959-61:

AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS (PERCENTAGE)

| *Size of holding (in acres)* | *8th round (1953-54)* | | *17th round (1959-61)* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Number* | *Area* | *Number* | *Area* |
| Below 0.50 | 11.71 | 0.30 | 8.55 | 0.38 |
| Below 1.00 | 19.72 | 1.07 | 17.13 | 1.27 |
| Below 2.50 | 39.14 | 5.43 | 39.07 | 6.86 |
| Below 5.00 | 60.00 | 25.44 | 61.69 | 19.18 |
| Below 7.50 | 72.17 | 25.34 | 74.53 | 30.91 |
| Below 10.00 | 79.73 | 34.00 | 81.49 | 39.88 |
| Below 20.00 | 91.81 | 56.53 | 93.19 | 63.66 |
| Below 30.00 | 95.73 | 69.19 | 96.79 | 76.35 |
| All sizes | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 |

The survey also shows that the total number of agricultural holdings has increased in this period. It is the result of

the imposition of ceilings to a certain extent. It also shows that largescale capitalist cultivation has not emerged, whereas large feudal properties have been somewhat parcelled out. On the whole the problems arising out of fragmentation and subdivision of holdings remain unsolved.

## IV

Agrarian relations in India, conditions of the peasantry, the class character of the rural poor, etc. are very complex problems to be studied. There are extreme formulations—it is nothing but feudalism kept intact or even a throwback to feudalism that is taking place or that capitalism is already dominant in Indian agriculture. As early as in the 1920s, M. N. Roy himself tried to prove such a conclusion. All these are, of course, superficial generalisations based upon a partial study of certain phenomena without an integrated study of the various aspects of land relations taken as a whole.

In this respect, Lenin's book *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* is an excellent guide. The same problem dealt with by Marx in *Capital*, Volume III, has been creatively applied by Lenin, with masterly analysis, in the concrete case of Russia, first published at the end of 1899. It is a valuable guide for understanding the phenomena of agrarian relations in a society where labour rent or forced labour predominated, feudal landlords had the monopoly of the major portion of land, and at the base strong remnants of the old village communities (the mirs) persisted. From these data the Narodniks came to the conclusion that capitalism has not and shall not develop in Russian agriculture and the village communes will be directly transformed into communism in agriculture.

In this book Lenin debunked this theory by detecting the growth of capitalism in Russian agriculture despite the prevalence of feudalism and the village communes.

Lenin defined agricultural capitalism in the following words: "The capitalist farming system consists of the hire of workers (annual, seasonal, day, etc.) who till the land with the owners' implements" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 195).

Some Indian economists ignore this scientific definition when they try to prove that "attached farm servants", "seasonal character of labour", "extremely low wages", "rural unemployment", etc. are the phenomena of semifeudalism and not capitalism. That was the position of the Narodniks. Lenin started from the basic standpoint of Marx and then showed that:

> "Lastly, it must be observed that sometimes the labour service system passes into the capitalist system and merges with it to such an extent that it becomes almost impossible to distinguish one from the other. For example, a peasant rents a plot of land, undertaking in return to perform a definite number of days' work (a practice which, as we know, is most widespread...). How are we to draw a line of demarcation between such a 'peasant' and the West European or Ostsee "farm labourer" who receives a plot of land on undertaking to work a definite number of days? Life creates forms that unite in themselves with remarkable gradualness systems of economy whose basic features constitute opposites. It becomes impossible to say where 'labour service' ends and where 'capitalism' begins" (*Ibid.*, p. 197).

With remarkable clarity Lenin has depicted the complicated process of the growth of agricultural capitalism from serfdom, the two often being very difficult to distinguish. An ignorance of this complexity has led many experts to deny that capitalism has been growing in Indian agriculture.

Lenin in his book *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* distinguished between the precapitalist and the capitalist systems in agriculture in the following passages:

> "...Marx, in describing the precapitalist systems of agriculture, analysed *all* the forms of economic relations... and clearly emphasised the necessity of smallscale production and of a tie between the peasant and the land in the case of both labour rent, rent in kind and money rent... This tie between the producer and the means of production was

the source of, and condition for, medieval exploitation, constituted the basis for technical and social stagnation and necessarily required all sorts of 'other than economic, pressure' " (*Ibid.*, p. 211).

In short, the tie between the cultivator and land, small-scale production and noneconomic pressure on the peasant by the landlord for the rate of rent—these three constitute the basic features of precapitalist land relations.

"We now pass to the principal manifestation of agricultural capitalism—to the employment of hired labour" (*Ibid.*, p. 237).

"The capitalist farming system consists of the hire of workers (annual, seasonal, day, etc.) who till the lands with the owner's implements" (*Ibid.*, p. 195).

The chief feature is, of course, according to Lenin, accompanied by production for the market, as opposed to production for direct consumption, and finally the application of higher technique in production. Commodity economy undermines precapitalist relations and engenders capitalism.

Applying Lenin's test (Lenin followed Marx's methodology) we can examine India's agrarian relations as they have developed since the achievement of independence and particularly since the introduction of certain agrarian measures by the congress government.

An analysis of the census of 1961 reveals that 36.96 per cent of the rural population are workers and of these, agricultural workers constitute 30.61 per cent. This category in the census reports includes also a great bulk of the sharecroppers, but even then the agricultural workers living on wages cannot but be less than 20 per cent of the rural workers. The number of agricultural workers as per census definition increased from 27.5 million in 1951 to 31.5 million in 1961. This fact reveals that the growth of wage labour in agriculture began under British rule and thereby the home market for agricultural capitalism was already in existence before the achievement of independence, before the introduction of certain agrarian measures

by the congress government—the latter did not at all bring about any revolution in agriculture. But the agrarian measures of the congress government coupled with industrial expansion, i.e., capitalist development in general, have given a fillip to agricultural capitalism also.

The main difference between the agricultural labourer and the tenant at will (including the sharecropper) from the point of view of land relations is that the former cultivates the land with the implements, etc. belonging to the employer (landowner or leaseholder as the case may be) while the tenant at will cultivates it with his own implements. In the former case, the worker's wage (high or low) is fixed in relation to the period of work, while in the latter case the landlord's share (i.e., rent) is either fixed or determined by the whim of the landowner. The sharecropper or the tenant at will is no longer legally tied to the land but practically cannot get out of it due to the existence of private monopoly in land and lack of employment elsewhere. The wage worker is free to work anywhere or to compete collectively like the industrial worker but his competitive capacity is also limited by the fact that land is too scarce and agricultural labour force is too big. Through numerous struggles in the past, the sharecroppers have been able to extricate themselves, long before independence, from attachment to land and from many noneconomic compulsions.

It follows that land relations in India's agriculture are marked mainly by a transitional character in many respects due to the interpenetration of precapitalist and capitalist features, one being weakly distinguished from the other in some respects. Even then 3 categories of farms can be broadly distinguished from one another:

(1) Land leased to sharecroppers and other tenants at will who cultivate it with their own implements and other resources;

(2) landlord or peasant farms cultivated mainly by hired labour; and

(3) small peasant farms cultivated by the peasants themselves with their own labour and implements supplemented also by hired labour to some extent.

Before we examine the special character of these types, it must be noted that agricultural production for the market (i.e., commodity economy) has developed in course of the last two decades or so far more sweepingly than ever before. Money economy has invaded the remotest village to such an extent that it is bound to dissolve the precapitalist land relations. Today even the dwarf peasant, growing foodgrains, whose holding is so small that he cannot grow enough for his own consumption for the year, is obliged to sell much of it to the market in the beginning of the year and then to purchase foodgrains again from the market towards the middle of the year for the purpose of consumption. This trend in rural economy existed even before independence. Now it has been extended. Thus the home market for capitalism has expanded more than before. So sweeping is the advance of commodity economy, the very foundation of capitalism, that production for the market is almost the general rule for all types of farmers. In the case of commercial crops, the entire production is made for the market. Now let us examine the economic character of the abovementioned categories.

*Category* No. 1: In 1951 about 40 per cent of land was rented (i.e., leased out by big owners to mainly dwarf peasants) and in 1960 (16th Round of NSS) leasing came down to 14 per cent, part of which was leased in by rich landowners from poor peasants. Tenant holdings, according to the census of 1961, constituted nearly 22 per cent of the total land under cultivation. This reveals that the feudal type of land relation has been squeezed but the extent of squeezing is less than what the figures suggest because they do not include concealed tenancy. At the same time, part of the 22 per cent of tenant land is leased out by poor peasants to big landowners.

In any case, semifeudal land relations must have come down, after independence, from 40 per cent to about 25 per

cent of all land under cultivation. This is, of course, a guess to be confirmed through investigation.

*Category* No. 2: At present about 30 to 40 per cent of all arable land is cultivated by hired labour either in full or in part. But according to experts, about 10 per cent was cultivated (in 1953-54) fully or predominantly by hired labour and now the percentage must have increased. In some regions (Maharashtra, Western UP, coastal districts of Andhra) the percentage is very high. It follows that the capitalist mode of cultivation and capitalist relations are growing and in *certain regions* it is the dominant sector in agriculture.

*Category* No. 3: From the preceding account it follows that a very large percentage of the arable land is cultivated by small peasant owners, mainly by their own labour and with their own implements, etc. They are directly under the state and not under any feudal landowners. They bear the brunt of 3 scourges: (i) inadequate capital resources: (ii) usurious moneylending; and (iii) the price scissor.

Peasants belonging to all the three categories commonly suffer from the survivals of precapitalist economy as well as from manipulation of the market by capitalist monopolies:

(i) *Lack of technical resources* for agricultural improvement which forces peasants to depend mostly on weather is another source of trouble for all the peasantry—though there has been some improvement in irrigation and supply of fertilisers.

(ii) *Usurious moneylending*: About 80 per cent of the peasants are indebted to big landowners and professional moneylenders. Recently the rich peasants have entered this field while the ratio of professional moneylenders has shrunk.

(iii) Big *capitalist monopolies* including wholesale traders rob the peasants of the just price of their products. Rich peasants are, of course, less victims of this mode of exploitation while the poor peasants with tiny holdings suffer the most. But all sections of the peasantry are exploited by the monopolies through high price of the industrial goods.

## V

Land monopoly in the hands of a small minority of households arising out of feudal survivals and continuing under capitalist farming has produced an acute landhunger in 80 per cent of the peasant households and agricultural labourers. As late as in 1961, 7 per cent of the holdings of 20 acres or more comprise 36 per cent of the cultivated area; at the other extreme, 61.69 per cent of the holdings of 5 acres or less comprised only 19.18 per cent of the area under cultivation. This reveals the existence of land monopoly in the hands of a few—10 per cent of the rural population possessing more than 50 per cent of land—at the one end, coexisting with extreme landhunger at the other, 75 per cent of the rural population being either landless or extremely landpoor. It also reveals extreme subdivision of holdings, which is also responsible for technical backwardness and stagnation in our agriculture.

Thus the structure of land distribution is the most pressing problem for our rural economy and the mass of the peasantry. This calls for a revision of the ceilings on landholdings and the distribution of the surplus land to the landless and landpoor. It also calls for the development of cooperative farming on a big scale with special state aid in order to give incentives to the cooperatives. Distribution of surplus land to the tillers by the imposition of a proper ceiling along with government fallow land is the primary incentive. But the question of credit, fertilisers, irrigation facilities and fair price are also very important. These measures are not simply antifeudal measures because the large holdings today are mostly cultivated by employing hired labour. It is a measure that may pave the way for noncapitalist development.

These are some of the steps that will go a long way to eliminate the survivals of feudalism, to restrict exploitation by the capitalist monopolies and thereby lead to agricultural progress and prosperous life for the peasantry.

Capitalist development of agriculture is not the inevitable alternative to the remnants of semifeudal land relations in our

agriculture, for a number of important reasons—both economic and historical.

Economically speaking, the development of the capitalist mode of cultivation even by the socalled green revolution has benefited only the rich strata of the peasantry, the middle peasants benefited less than the former while the vast majority (i.e., poor peasants and agricultural labourers) are deprived of any benefit.

The index of overall agricultural production has risen from 100 in 1949-50 to 163 in 1968-69, the output being nearly 100 million tons.

The socalled new strategy of "green revolution" (intensive agricultural development programme) was evolved by the Government of India in 1965. It was applied in 114 districts by supplying highyielding varieties of seed, fertilisers and water for irrigation. Francine Frankel undertook a study of its impact on the socioeconomic relations of the peasantry, under the auspices of the USAID. The *Mainstream* (29 November 1969) published the concluding portion of his report. It contains the following information:

> "In cases where small farmers also take part of their holdings on lease, or are pure tenants, rising rentals in recent years (in response to sharp spurt in land values) and/or tendency of landowners to resume land for personal cultivation (with the introduction of profitable techniques) has actually led to an absolute deterioration in the economic condition of the smallowner-cum-tenant-cultivator class..."

Frankel then continues: "Farmers with ownership holdings between five and ten acres have done better." But it appears that "only the small minority of cultivators with holdings of ten acres or more have been in a position to mobilise surplus capital for investment in land development, especially minor irrigation, as an essential precondition for the efficient utilisation of modern inputs".

Frankel's investigation establishes two points. Firstly, capitalist development without a thorough agrarian reform

completely eliminating the remnants of feudalism, improvement of agriculture is bound to be limited. Secondly, even within the sphere of capitalist development, the vast mass of the poor peasants are deprived of the benefits. Under these conditions, the only path for an upsurge of agricultural production is noncapitalist development after eliminating the remnants of feudalism.

Describing Russian conditions, Lenin spoke of two paths of capitalist development—the Prussian path of building large-scale private landlord capitalist farms and the revolutionary path of nationalisation of land and sweeping capitalist development by completely confiscating the entire property of the landlords. But India in 1970 is different from Russia in 1900. Capitalist development in Indian agriculture is taking place without completely sweeping away the remnants of feudalism and without even creating such big landlord capitalist farms as in Prussia of the 19th century. Extreme right reactionaries aspire for such a development but cannot do in view of the preponderance of small holdings bound to resist mass eviction that is required for such a development.

The historically known revolutionary path of capitalist development is also unreal on account of the following reasons:

(1) Small peasants reject nationalisation of land without which such a development is unthinkable. They reject this solution because private proprietorship of land is strongly entrenched among the peasants. Therefore, the only course, that capitalist development can follow, is bound to be a halting one, its technical aspect is bound to remain weak and the masses of agricultural labourers are bound to be economically worse off than any other section of the population.

(2) Capitalism in India, though weakly developed, has already reached its decadent stage so much so that even in the industrial sphere, the progress is very halting and more capital is locked up in circulation than in production. The black-market stifles the reconversion of money capital into productive capital. Naturally agricultural capitalism is bound to be

more slothful than the industrial. As India is passing through the crisis of the capitalist path in one form or another, agricultural capitalism has no future prospect for the people.

(3) The emergence of monopoly capital, in India's national economy, in cooperation with foreign capital, stifles the development of productive forces and, in particular, restricts the growth of the agrarian bourgeoisie exploited by the former.

(4) A striking factor of the economic situation is lack of capital formation in agriculture. According to the All India Rural Credit Review Committee,

> "The ratio of savings to income in the rural sector almost remained unchanged around 2.3 per cent from 1950-51 to 1962-63 though there was a substantial increase in rural incomes over the years, while the corresponding ratio for urban households rose from 7.3 per cent to 17 per cent during this period... The proportion of the rural savings to total savings in the economy, therefore, went down by nearly one and a half times from 29.3 per cent to 15.2 per cent during this period."

And yet this is the period of comparatively more rapid development of capitalism in India.

(5) The bankruptcy of agricultural capitalism is also reflected in the conditions of the agricultural labourers. They are worse than those of any other class. The Minimum Wages Act has remained a dead letter. The annual earnings of the agricultural workers are far below those of the lowest paid industrial workers. The incidence of unemployment is 15 per cent for agricultural labour households as compared to 3 per cent among others. In terms of social discrimination, agricultural labour is the worst sufferer. He has no house to live and no security of service; dearness allowance is for him an unrealisable dream.

(6) Finally and primarily, in the modern epoch, capitalist development of Indian agriculture is not historically inevitable as it was in Russia in the beginning of the 20th century. After the Great October Socialist Revolution, its expansion

into a world socialist system and after the liberation of most of the colonies and semicolonies, the ways have been paved for noncapitalist development of the hitherto backward countries. Growing economic superiority of the world socialist system to the system of world capitalism seals the fate of the capitalist path.

Under these conditions, the real alternatives in India are not two paths of capitalist development but different "two paths", namely, the limited capitalist path and the revolutionary noncapitalist path. Indian peasants and Indian agriculture are historically destined to pursue the second one. In this respect, the increasing grip of Marxist-Leninist ideology and the leading role of socialist ideas in the political movement in India are the decisive subjective factors which rule out an "alternative capitalist path" in Indian agriculture.

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LENIN

# The National Question and India

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As on other questions, Lenin made a unique contribution to the further elaboration and development of the teachings of Karl Marx on the national question. And, as on all other questions, he stood by his convictions on the national question with unflinching loyalty to principle when he had to implement them in practice as the leader of the Soviet revolution and Soviet power.

Like Marx and Engels, Lenin constantly and mercilessly attacked colonial conquest and plunder by the European powers and gave wholehearted support to nations and peoples fighting for national liberation. Simultaneously, he made an invaluable contribution to the scientific exposition of the historical development of the national question and its democratic, socialist solution.

Lenin's point of departure on this question (as on others) was certain principles and guiding lines laid down by Marx and Engels.

The founders of Marxism had clearly stated that no nation

can be free if it oppresses other nations. They stood for the right of nations to self-determination. At the same time, they called upon the workers of all countries to strengthen their class solidarity in their common struggle against world capitalism for the achievement of socialism.

A correct understanding and solution of the national question demands a grasp of these principles as an interconnected, complementary whole. That is how Lenin always treated them in his writings and in his masterly handling of most vexing and complicated national problems both before and after the achievement of Soviet power.

## I

For the puprose of the present article, I want to stress certain vital aspects of Lenin's treatment of the national question.

One: Lenin stated, "The categorical requirement of Marxist theory in investigating any social question is that it be examined within *definite* historical limits, and, if it refers to a particular country (e.g. the national programme for a given country), that account be taken of the specific features distinguishing that country from others in the same historical epoch" (Italics orginal: "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination" in the collection of Lenin's articles: *Questions of National Policy and Proletarian Internationalism*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 56).

Thus, when we examine the national question with regard to India, it is our responsibility to examine its specific, distinctive features while basing ourselves on the general Marxist-Leninist theory on the national question.

Two: Lenin clearly explains the process and content of the development of nations in the modern sense of the term, i.e. in the period of the development of capitalism. Thus, we have, "Throughout the world, the period of the final victory of capitalism over feudalism has been linked up with national movements. For the complete victory of commodity produc-

tion, the bourgeoisie must capture the home market, and there must be politically united territories whose population speaks a single language, with all obstacles to the development of that language and its consolidation in literature eliminated. Therein is the economic foundation of national movements. Language is the most important means of human communication. Unity and unimpeded development of language are the most important conditions for genuinely free and extensive commerce on a scale commensurate with modern capitalism, for a free and broad grouping of the population in all its various classes...

"Therefore, the tendency of every national movement is towards the formation of *national states*... The most profound economic factors drive towards this goal, and, therefore, for the whole of Western Europe, nay, for the entire civilised world, the national state is *typical* and normal for the capitalist period" (Italics original, *Ibid*, p. 51-52).

From this general standpoint, Lenin also stated, "Capitalism, having awakened Asia, has called forth national movements everywhere in that continent too; the tendency of these movements is towards the creation of national states in Asia" (*Ibid*, p. 55).

Three: From the beginning of the First World War, the emphasis of Lenin's writings on the national question shifts more and more to the national liberation struggle of the peoples and countries suffering from imperialist oppression, exploitation and domination. The focus of national liberation shifts to colonial liberation. And after the Russian revolution, he stresses the link up of the national liberation movement with Soviet power, with the world socialist revolution, as allies in the common struggle against imperialism. This means that the national development of the countries subject to imperialist domination and oppression takes place in the struggle against imperialism, the struggle against foreign rule, the struggle for national independence, and with the victory of the Soviet revolution, in alliance with the struggle for world socialism.

Apart from innumerable other writings, these points stand

out boldly in Lenin's theses on "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination" (written in February 1916, *Ibid*, pp. 124-40) and in his famous draft theses on "The National and Colonial Questions" presented to the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920.

Four: Basing himself on the Marxist principle that no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations, Lenin stated, "The Marxist fully recognises the historical legitimacy of national movements" (*Ibid*, p. 30). Still further, "Whoever does not recognise and champion the equality of nations and languages, and does not fight against all national oppression and inequality, is not a Marxist; he is not even a democrat" (*Ibid*, p. 23).

Following from this Lenin always defended the right of nations to self-determination, and made it equally clear that that right meant the right of secession and the formation of an independent state. Denial or dilution of the right of secession, according to Lenin, was the denial of the right of self-determination.

In Lenin's words, "there is *one case* in which the Marxists are duty bound, if they do not want to betray democracy and the proletariat, to defend one special demand in the national question; that is, the *right* of nations to self-determination (point 9 of the RSDLP Programme), i.e., the right to political secession" (Italics original, *Ibid*, p. 8).

*In the concrete*, in all his writings and policy decisons, Lenin always related the right of self-determination to the struggle of the oppressed nations against oppressor nations, the struggle against imperialist aggression, conquest, annexations and so on.

In the report of the commission on the national and colonial questions to the Second Congress of the Comintern, Lenin said: "What is the cardinal, the underlying idea of our theses? The distinction between oppressed and oppressor nations" (Lenin: *National Liberation Movement in the East*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, p. 264.)

Lenin's Decree on Peace issued immediately after the seizure of power by the Soviets in the October revolution is world famous. Though the decree speaks of "peace without annexations and indemnities" and does not use the word self-determination, it is obviously a masterly application of the right of self-determination to the question of achieving a just and democratic peace. (Why Lenin renounced all the annexations and seizures of non-Russian territory made by the tsars, *after* the socialist revolution, when Russia could no longer be considered an oppressing nation, is nothing but a legalistic, formal question to which Lenin has given a thoroughly satisfactory reply, which need not be repeated here.)

Five: While clearly bringing out the basic relationship of national movements and the right of self-determination to capitalist, economic development and the right of all languages to equality and full development, Lenin also clarifies the question of cultural affinity in the sphere of national development. This, in fact, is one of Lenin's most valuable contributions to the understanding of the extremely complex and emotion-charged question of national culture and its relation to the international culture of the working class movement.

Lenin says, "It is true that international culture is not non-national. Nobody said that it was. Nobody has proclaimed a 'pure' culture...

"The *elements* of democratic and socialist culture are present, if only in rudimentary form, in every national culture, since in *every* nation there are toiling and exploited masses, whose conditions of life inevitably give rise to the ideology of democracy and socialism. But *every* nation also possesses a bourgeois culture (and most nations, a reactionary and clerical culture as well) in the form, not merely of 'elements' but of the *dominant* culture.

"In advancing the slogan of 'the international culture of democracy and of the world working class movement' we take *from each* national culture *only* its democratic and socialist elements; we take them *only* and *absolutely* in opposition to the bourgeois culture and the bourgeois nationalism of *each*

nation" (Italics original: *Questions of National Policy and Proletarian Internationalism*, pp. 18-19).

In another famous artcle, "The National Pride of the Great Russians" Lenin poses and replies to an extremely significant and pertinent question in regard to national pride.

"Is the sense of national pride alien to us, Great Russian class-conscious proletarians? Certainly not. We love our language and our country, we are doing our utmost to raise *her* toiling masses (i.e. ninetenths of *her* population) to democratic and socialist consciousness. It pains us more than anybody else to see and feel the outrage, oppression and humiliation inflicted on our splendid country by the tsarist hangmen, the nobles and the capitalists. We are proud of the fact that these outrages have met with resistance in our midst, among the Great Russians... We are filled with a sense of national pride, and for that very reason we *particularly* hate our slavish past and our slavish present..." (Italics original, *Ibid*, pp. 120-21).

Lastly, I will mention a point which is so fundamental that it hardly needs reiteration since it runs like a red thread through all the writings of Lenin on the question, viz. that national unity must not only not be contraposed to the unity of the international working class movement in the struggle for socialism, but that the latter is the condition for a just and democratic solution of the national question. National unity does not and cannot mean the unity of the toilers and the exploiters in a country in the narrow, selfish interests of the exploiters.

Lenin says, "The bourgeois nationalism of *any* oppressed nation has a general democratic content that is directed *against* oppression, and it is this content that we *unconditionally* support. At the same time we strictly distinguish it from the tendency towards national exclusiveness" (Italics original, *Ibid.*, p. 70).

Further, "Those who seek to serve the proletariat must unite the workers of all nations, and unswervingly fight bourgeois nationalism, *domestic* and foreign" (Italics original, *Ibid*, p. 20).

Such is Lenin's guidance on what the international working class movement, communists, have to support in respect of national movements, national demands and bourgeois nationalism and what they have to oppose.

## II

Among Marxists, in India and abroad, we come across references to the main linguistic groups in India, living in distinct, contiguous regions, as so many nationalities. Indian reactionaries utilise all such references as a handle in their crusade against communism. Among progressive and democratic elements, they create apprehensions that any such characterisation of the language groups in India would feed separatist, secessionist movements in the country, threatening its unity and entailing its fragmentation.

These questions should and have to be dealt with seriously and separately. Meanwhile, even from the point of view of a fully objective and historical treatment of the subject, i.e., a treatment related to the specific, distinguishing features of the problem in India, it should be recognised that Marxists also need to examine the question more deeply and thoroughly, which they have not done till now. Reference to the linguistic divisions in India as nationalities clearly raises certain questions which must be answered. They cannot be bypassed nor can one close one's eyes to their existence.

For instance, if they are characterised as nationalities, what is the relation of the linguistic groups in India to the generally accepted view of India being a nation?

Is the concept and mass consciousness of Indian nationhood only an emotional, sentimental, abstract phenomenon? Is it only notional and subjective? Or does it have not only an emotional, but also a historical, substantial, objective content? If so, what is that content?

This is by no means a doctrinaire question. One cannot brush it aside as an exercise in quibbling or hair-splitting. For, on its answer depends what precisely is meant by the charac-

terisation of our linguistic regions as nationalities, and vital questions of practical policy related to them.

To begin with, prior to the achievement of Indian independence, it was always the imperialists and their henchmen in India that insisted that India was not a nation but a conglomeration of races, religions, languages, castes and so on. The denial of India's national entity was sought to be made the theoretical-political "justification" for the denial of Indian freedom.

On the contrary, it was the organisers and leaders of the national freedom movement, the politically conscious people of India, and their friends and supporters abroad that championed and took pride in India's nationhood as the basis of its right to national independence. That there was no clear understanding of what was precisely new in Indian national consciousness, in what way it was demarcated from traditional notions regarding India's cultural unity, is a different matter, though even there, many Indian patriots did distinguish, in their propaganda and political activity, between the divisive and undemocratic elements of India's cultural heritage and the unifying, humanistic, equalitarian elements of our heritage. They advocated rejection of the former elements and the emulation of the latter.

The main point is that India's anti-imperialist, patriotic movement and its spokesmen and ideologues, one and all, spoke of the Indian national movement, of national unity and awakening, of a national perspective and goal, of national independence, and so on. And the main organised expression of this consciousness became the Indian National Congress.

Clearly, the only socio-economic-political entity to which all these attributes can be applied is a nation.

It could not be religion, and it is a proved fact of history that those who thought and spoke in terms of either Hindus or Muslims being a nation helped not to unify but to disrupt India's national, anti-imperialist, democratc unity.

It was not the distinctive consciousness of the people speaking different Indian languages, for what was meant by national

consciousness was precisely the common consciousness, as Indians, of people speaking the different languages and fighting, as Indians, against foreign rule for freedom.

So the question arises, can we explain, in terms of Lenin's analysis and exposition of the national question, this concept and consciousness, and a massive, modern, abiding consciousness at that, of India being a nation? I think we can.

Lenin relates the evolution of modern national movements, national awakening, focused on the urge to form independent national states, to the rise of the bourgeoisie and the struggle for equality on the language question. When he referred to this development in relation to Western Europe, he emphasised the rise of the bourgeoisie against feudalism. When he referred to the colonial world, he naturally emphasised, in the main, the anti-imperialist aspect of the rise of the colonial bourgeoisie.

Now, under British rule, from whom did the rising Indian bourgeoisie, irrespective of the language or region to which one or another group belonged, have "to capture the home market"? Obviously from the British bourgeoisie and their representatives who ruled over India. It was they who first ruined the traditional Indian handicrafts by the notorious methods of primary accumulation. Later, again, it was they who, on the strength of their more advanced scientific and technological development, as also by the use of coercive political power (preferential imperialist tariffs, the imposition of excise duties on Indian industry, and colonial economic policy in general), prevented the development of the Indian market except in so far as it suited the purposes of imperialist exploitation, and practically monopolised the market to the extent that they allowed its expansion.

Thus, the problem which the rising Indian bourgeoisie in different parts of the country faced was not of any one of them being strangulated or ousted from the home market by the bourgeoisie from some other part of India. The problem they faced was common to *all*, viz. of the ruling British bourgeoisie shackling the development of *all* of them, preventing *all* from

building their own industry, and denying the entire Indian market to the extent that it developed, to *each and all*. The home market had to be captured, not by one group of the Indian bourgeoisie from another, but by *all* of them from the dominating, oppressing British bourgeoisie.

Under the given conditions, it was historically both natural and inevitable that the entire Indian bourgeoisie (apart from the compradore elements), irrespective of language, should seek to build a common national movement, and that the Indian people should develop the consciousness of a common nationhood.

It is enough to point out that swadeshi and the boycott of foreign (imperialist) goods rallied our freedom movement almost from the beginning, not only as economic issues, but as political slogans for which tens of thousands suffered and went to jail. It is not necessary to elaborate or illustrate the point at any greater length.

Identically the same situation was true in respect of the development of Indian languages.

The English language dominated the administration (executive, judicial, and later, the legislatures when they came). It dominated education as the medium of instruction in all subjects—not only in the teaching of science, medicine, the humanities and so on, but even for teaching Sanskrit, the ancient language of Indians themselves. English also dominated trade, commerce and industry.

Under the circumstances, there was no question of any particular Indian language obstructing or restricting the development of any other Indian language.

The problem that was there was *common to all*, viz. the development of *all* Indian languages being obstructed and restricted by the imposition of English in the decisive spheres of social, economic and political life.

Naturally enough, the urge to develop one's own language brought *all* the linguistic regions of India into the common struggle against the imposition of English as the language of foreign rulers.

From the beginning of this century, the starting of schools without government (British) aid, in which education was given a patriotic content and the medium used was the mother tongue, became a highly esteemed limb of our freedom movement. Literary organisations of most of our languages were started and supported by the patriotic movement.

In this context, Gandhiji's approach to the solution of the extremely complex language problem in India was very significant.

Gandhiji consistently stood for and championed the full development and equality of all the languages in India. At the same time, realising the need of a common medium of intercourse between people speaking the different languages, *for the purpose of achieving national unity against foreign rule,* he also campaigned for the voluntary acceptance of Hindustani by all linguistic groups in India as the medium for mutual intercourse. Recognising and granting the need of English for international intercourse by Indians, he was opposed to English being the common medium in the country.

Thus, in relation to English, Gandhiji put forward Hindustani as the language of national unification, and at the same time, recognising the democratic nature of the urge of all the people of India to develop their own languages, he not only championed that urge but insisted that the acceptance of Hindi by people speaking other languages had to be voluntary and not through any compulsion.

Further, convinced that the realisation of the democratic urges of the people speaking different languages in the country required their being organised in linguistic divisions, Gandhiji put the organisation of the Indian National Congress on a linguistic basis and also advocated that, when India became free, Indian states should be reorganised on a linguistic basis.

Gandhiji's solution of the language problem in India thus provided both for national, anti-imperialist unification and a thorough democratic approach to all the languages in the country. The solution incorporated all the requisite elements,

viz., freedom from the domination of a foreign language, national unity, and democracy and equality in respect of inter-lingual relations in the country.

In the sphere of national culture, as I have stated earlier, the situation was considerably confused, complex and also complicated.

But even in this sphere, I think it can be stated without exaggeration that the best and more enlightened patriots in India did strive for interlacing the unifying, equalitarian and humanistic elements from India's inherited culture with the new anti-imperialist, national, democratic consciousness they struggled to forge in the country. They strove to give Indian culture an anti-imperialist, national-unificatory connotation.

What was unquestionably new in India's new national consciousness as distinguished from the traditional conception and notions of Indian unity was that it was a political consciousness.

Though in India's long history certain empire builders had brought nearly the whole of the country under one rule, the political unity of the country was never considered an *indispensable requisite* (sine qua non) of Indian unity. In fact, the latter was considered as something that transcended the political division of the country arising from its different parts being under different rulers.

In contrast, the fundamental urge of the new national consciousness, the new national unity, was the *political unity* of India for the formation of an independent, national state. It was anti-imperialist, and also, growingly, against the parcelling of parts of the country involved in the existence of hundreds of princely, feudal states. The new national consciousness could not be reconciled with any territorial division of the country and *vice versa*. The two were incompatible. Political-territorial unity was inseparable from the new consciousness of national unity.

And this is precisely the thing that Lenin pinpoints when he says that modern national movements necessarily strive to

secure "politically united territories", aimed at achieving independent, national states. He characterises such unity as a "must".

In brief, whether one considers the question from the point of view of India's rising capitalist development, or the question of the development of Indian languages, or the political content of the new Indian national consciousness (and, of course, the three are historically interrelated), the emergence of Indian nationhood, as the product of the joint struggle of all the people of India against British imperialist rule, was a historical, objective reality, an entity with substance and not just a sentimental, emotional phenomenon.

## III

We will come to the new development and complications of the problem since the achievement of Indian independence in due course. But in respect of this period, too, I would first like to draw attention to its continuity with the past.

Even today, we and the CPM continue to speak of the unfinished Indian revolution, the necessity of completing the anti-imperialist, antifeudal, national democratic revolution in the country.

Both characterise the Indian state as one of certain Indian nationwide classes. Both continue to speak of the Indian national bourgeoisie and various strata of the national bourgeoisie.

We speak of the national democratic revolution, the national democratic front, the future government of national democracy. The CPM speaks of the people's democratic revolution, the people's democratic front, the future government of people's democracy, be it noted, of India.

The class alliances that the two parties seek to forge, despite our differences on the role of the national bourgeoisie and hence the next phase of the revolution, are posed on the all-India national plane. I am not here referring to proletarian

unity, which is in a class by itself, but to the anti-imperialist, antifeudal, antimonopoly allies sought by the working class.

Why is this so? Why is it that no one speaks of or raises the question of a united front, an alliance of the Indian working class with this, that or any group of nationalities in the country? We must ask ourselves this question.

We must not forget that Lenin issued the slogan, "Workers of all countries and the oppressed nations, unite!" This slogan of Lenin not only requires us to pose the abovementioned question but, in my opinion, also gives a clue to the answer.

The answer lies in this that, for Lenin, the question of the rights of nationalities was always a question as between an oppressor nation and the nation or nations oppressed by it. It was in this context that he always raised and discussed the question.

Now within India, even after the achievement of independence, is there any question of an oppressing nationality and certain other nationalities being oppressed by it? There is none, and the reply is so obvious and clear that it needs no proof.

The problem in India is of a multilingual monopoly bourgeoisie (of many nationalities, if that term is used), supported by the feudal elements and foreign monopoly capital, exploiting and oppressing the working people and the peasantry of India, and also inflicting various kinds of injustices upon and suppressing the democratic rights of the people speaking all the languages in the country (nationalities). The specific manner in which the injustice is done is not the same in respect of people speaking different languages, but the fact remains that all are subject to the denial of their democratic, linguistic rights and there is no pampered, specially favoured linguistic group in the country.

That is why there is no question here of the working class allying itself with one or another language group (nationality) against any particular, oppressing language group (nation).

Those who have to unite against injustice and oppression belong to all linguistic groups and regions and those against whom unity is forged also belong to many or all languages, in any case, not to any particular language (an oppressing nation).

The problem of democratic rights and interests on the question of language and the development of linguistic regions is a common problem for *all* as against the injustice done to them by all the reactionary class forces in India and abroad. It is definitely not a problem of one or more linguistic groups having to struggle against some other dominating linguistic group.

And for the same reason, I think the question of the right of secession of nationalities also needs examination in relation to India.

I am not speaking of the expediency of secession. No Marxist has suggested it and the disastrous consequences of any linguistic region (state) attempting to secede from the Indian union, not only for the rest of the country but for the region itself, are so obvious that no space need be wasted on arguing the point.

Besides, Lenin also made a clear distinction between the right of secession and the expediency and desirability of exercising that right. With regard to the latter, he clearly explained that each case had to be judged on its specific merits and demerits.

However, it is equally true that whenever he referred to the right, as such, he was against qualifying it.

But again, even at the cost of repetition, I should like to state that I have not come across any reference in Lenin to the right of secession except in the context of an oppressing nation and the nation or nations oppressed by it. The right does not hang in space, unrelated to such a context. Which is the oppressing nation and whom does it oppress in India?

Even further. Lenin explains in many places that the right of self-determination is part of the general rights of democracy, it is inseparably connected with them, that the struggle

for self-determination is part of the general struggle for democacy, and even more, the struggle for socialism.

Here, in India, the primary condition of our advance to fuller democracy and socialism is the unity of all democratic classes irrespective of differences in religion, race, language and so on, in their common struggle against the forces of monopoly, landlordism and foreign private capital, again, irrespective of their religion, race or language.

And is not the proposition true also in respect of securing the redress of so many injustices and discriminations in the sphere of language and linguistic regions which surely do exist in our country? Experience, and often bitter and costly experience, has definitely proved that this is true. Without the multilingual unity of all the toiling masses and democratic classes in India, due justice cannot be secured against discrimination even in the sphere of language and linguistic regions (states).

And that, for the simple reason that even in the sphere of nationalities, both the oppressors and the oppressed belong to all nationalities.

The point can be illustrated negatively also.

Post-independence experience shows that whenever secessionist trends and movements have arisen in one or another linguistic region in India under the guise of self-determination, they have not been directed against the imperialists, feudals and Indian monopolists. They are directed against grievances which are supposed or real but which are attributed to some other Indian region or to the people speaking some other language in India. And as we also know, the imperialists give overt or covert support to such movements, while the feudals and monopolists often play with the fire. This is surely not an accident.

The right of secession is a democratic right, meaning a right which must unify the common people in their struggle against reaction. If instead, it deepens hatred and conflict among the people, how does it become a democratic right?

That is why, while dealing with problems of inequality, injustice, discrimination and so on, in respect of language and

linguistic regions in India (which must be done and to which I will promptly come), we have to be clear that, apart from the inexpediency of secession which is not in doubt among communists, what to speak of other progressives and democrats, the right of secession is historically unreal in the specific context of Indian conditions and hence, untenable.

It is necessary for communists to take a clear position on the question because no one else refers to the linguistic groups in India as nationalities. And if one is to refer to them as nationalities one cannot keep mum on the issue of the right of secession which is naturally associated with nationalities. One cannot evade the question on the plea that what is suggested by the term nationality is not the desirability and expediency of secession.

## IV

The entire problem, as in fact all other social, economic, political and cultural problems, has become far more complicated during the period following the achievement of Indian independence.

At the root of the new complications, or the accentuation of older complications inherited from British rule and India's pre-British history, lies, undoubtedly, the path of capitalist development pursued by our rulers in the post-independence period. To be more correct, the complications have been accentuated by the pursuit of a path of capitalist development based on serious compromises with foreign private capital and Indian feudal interests.

Capitalist development, driven by lust for the highest and quickest profit, necessarily means uneven development, and further, monopoly development.

This has resulted not only in growing disparity and conflict as between the rich and the poor (thanks to which, no matter the intention of the exploiters, conditions are created for the development and unification of the democratic, socialist forces in the country) but also, specifically in our country,

disruptive conflicts arising from differences in respect of religion, caste, language, tribe, regional interests, and so on.

All Indian democrats and patriots have to realise that uneven, monopoly capitalist development in the country not only means the rich growing richer and the poor poorer (which realisation is already there), but that it necessarily leads to the disruption of India's democratic, national unity.

Firstly, this is inherent in the economic process itself. Secondly, monopolist, feudal and all other reactionary forces in India (aided and supported by foreign reaction), alarmed at the growing challenge of our democratic and socialist forces, are, in recent years, taking resort to conscious and deliberate incitement of the disruptive conflicts mentioned above.

Right reaction not only threatens popular living standards and democracy. It threatens, more and more, to lead India to fragmentation and dismemberment by fomenting all such social conflicts as enable it to divide the forces of democracy and socialism. The reactionary forces can and have to be defeated. But one has to be clear about the sinister and dangerous implications of the policies being followed by them.

The scope of this article does not cover all the social divisions to which I have just referred. We are dealing with problems connected with language and linguistic regions most of which are now covered by unilingual states.

What is necessary for the patriotic, democratic and progressive forces in India is to understand the real, objective character of these problems and their just and democratic solutions. Neither assertions of India's nationhood, however well-intentioned and passionate, nor denunciation of conflicts based on linguistic divisions as "linguism" has helped to solve them. And that, for the reason, that both these attitudes evade, in fact, are afraid of facing up to, the new reality.

At the same time, what is crucial is not whether we characterise Indian linguistic divisions as nationalities or not. Considering the specific and very distinctive features of the problem in India, where the linguistic regions or nationalities are organic components of India as a nation, a more apt nomen-

clature, in my opinion, is desirable. That would also be helpful to us, communists, in removing an unnecessary barrier of misunderstanding between us and noncommunist democrats in discussing and explaining the new reality which is what is vitally necessary.

On the other hand, progressives and democrats in India should also not recoil in horror at the mere mention of the word nationality by communists while speaking of the linguistic divisions in the country.

The communists, not a whit less than others, work passionately for strengthening the unity of the country by a thoroughgoing democratisation of every sphere of the social, economic and political life of the country. Their analysis and characterisation of the language problem in India are meant, not to splinter, but to strengthen the bonds of unity and fraternity between people speaking all our languages and living, mainly, in contiguous territorial divisions.

There is no quarrel over words and terminology. The point is to grasp the new reality, without which its correct, democratic, unifying solution cannot be found.

There is hardly a progressive or democrat in India who does not express deep anxiety over the growth of linguistic regional consciousness in our country in the post-independence period, a consciousness which often weakens the sense of national unity, the realisation of the common interest of the people speaking all our languages.

What is this development? Why has it taken place? Is it all wrong, unhealthy and parochial? Or does it also have democratic elements which need to be supported and separated from its chauvinistic, separatist elements like wheat from chaff? These are questions which no Indian patriot, democrat or progressive can ignore any longer.

A very good and well known Indian democrat recently wrote, with deep anguish, that now there is no India; now we have Maharashtra, Bengal, Tamilnadu, etc. etc. Another remarked that we seem to have become incapable of feeling as Indians except when threatened by a foreign attack. Failure to

understand the new problem, therefore, leads to despondency in the matter of India's continued political unity, which means, our future.

## V

Let us begin by stating the symptoms of the problem, i.e. the more important issues on which this new consciousness leading to conflicts based on language has expressed itself after independence.

The first to come up was the formation of linguistic states which has now been settled. But subsequently, in certain instances, the demarcation of the borders of linguistic states has led to even more bitterness and conflict than on the major question of their very formation.

Moreover, conflicts have arisen over the distribution of river waters for irrigation; the location of centrally aided industrial and power projects; the procurement, prices and distribution of foodgrains and agricultural raw materials; the allocation of central financial resources for the state plans; employment in the all-India services; priority in the matter of employment within the state (for "sons of the soil"); and all problems connected with the development of Hindi as the link language in the country.

It is very significant that the one question on which all the states are agreed is greater autonomy for the states vis-a-vis the centre in respect of financial and administrative powers.

Now, it should not be difficult to see that the nature of interstate and interlingual problems listed above is embryonically the same as a country feels when it is oppressed by some other country or when it feels aggrieved in relation to a neighbouring country. And in that sense, they have a national element which cannot be denied.

Of course, they have arisen in a context in which Indian nationhood, as I have explained earlier, is a historical, political reality, and has to be preserved and safeguarded as a prime necessity for our advance in the future.

So the first question is to locate, to analyse, the basic reason for the emergence of these problems, and then come to their solutions which have to be democratic and conducive to strengthening national unity. In the course of such an examination, we will be able to separate the popular and progressive from the narrow and parochial interests involved in the emergence of these problems and their solution.

Faster capitalist development has taken place in all the linguistic regions (states) of India after independence than before. But the rate of development as between the states (apart from different regions within a linguistic state, a problem not dealt with in this article) has been very different and uneven, because, as stated earlier, of the inherent laws of capitalist development. In result, the disparities between states have grown, accompanied by rising discontent against the implicit discrimination and injustice.

The problem is further complicated by the fact that the advanced states and regions also are confronted by peculiar and grave problems because of which the people in such states also feel deeply aggrieved and embittered. We have a situation of interstate bitterness combined with almost every state feeling that it is the victim of discrimination.

The solution of the problems arising from growing disparities as between linguistic states, and injustices in respect of the language question is undoubtedly extremely difficult, particularly when one comes to the specific and concrete issues that have to be dealt with.

Lenin himself said that while "it is the Marxist's *bounden* duty to stand for the most resolute and consistent democratism on all aspects of the national question", (Italics original, *Ibid.*, p. 30), "there is a borderline here, which is often very slight" (*Ibid*, p. 31). And he explains that while consistent democratism on the national question involves supporting bourgeois nationalism where it stands against oppression and for linguistic equality, one has to be clear about the strict limits of such support and not cross the line beyond which it would mean supporting narrow, undemocratic, bourgeois-national interests.

Broadly speaking, three main forces have been operating on the problem in our country, since independence.

The growing multilingual, monopoly bourgeoisie, with their powerful influence on the central government, have absolutely no love for any linguistic state or language, and are utterly callous towards questions of justice and equality in the matter. Their only concern is maximum profits for which they ride roughshod over such considerations and, in addition, play off one linguistic group or state against another for reaping their own advantage out of the conflict. The unprincipled and opportunist policies pursued by the central government in the matter are the expression of these monopoly interests. Imperialist reaction in India also plays the same game.

The urban and rural bourgeois interests of linguistic regions and groups do take democratic, popular positions when they come into conflict with the reactionary, opportunist policies of the central government, i.e., when principled positions suit their interests as well. At the same time, they also utilise popular support on such issues for their narrow, selfish interest. In cases where their interest conflicts with democratic principles, they do not stop short of taking opportunist and blackmailing positions.

It is the conscious section of the working class and the peasantry, mostly under communist leadership, and cultured sections of the intelligentsia who have a democratic, progressive and all-India outlook who take principled positions on the issues under dispute, irrespective of the language group to which they may belong.

Let us consider the main categories of questions which have come up since independence.

The first question to come up was the formation of linguistic states. It came up first in South India where the states inherited from British rule were multilingual. But that was not the only reason. The formation of linguistic states in the south came into a head on collision with three of the biggest feudal states in India, Hyderabad, Mysore and Travancore, apart from many others. It involved the break up of the multilingual Hyderabad

state, and alterations in the territorial composition of the other two. In Maharashtra the reorganisation also came into a clash with the monopoly bourgeoisie entrenched in Bombay city.

Thus the struggle of the Marathi, Gujarati, Telugu, Kannada and Malayali people for their linguistic states was clearly anti-feudal and antimonopoly-bourgeois. The bourgeoisie of these language groups fully supported it. The central government was opposed to all these struggles and conceded their demand only under the pressure of powerful mass movements.

What did the working class, the peasantry and other sections of the common people speaking these languages look forward to when they fought for their linguistic states? A more rapid economic development of their states in popular interest, and also the opportunity for more effective intervention in state politics since a basic demand of the movement was that state administration must be carried on in the language of the people, which was not done under the then existing multilingual set up of states. The question of equal rights and opportunities for the development of the concerned languages was a vital impelling force of these movements.

The bourgeoisie of these linguistic groups, however, while supporting the respective movements, were more concerned with securing positions of advantage and power in the prospective unilingual states which were not available to them under the multilingual set up.

That is why, after the formation of these states, which was a democratic advance, the common people of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra and Karnatak have not been able to secure the gains achieved by the Malayali people where the linguistic states movement was backed by a far more powerful worker-peasant movement under communist leadership (which led to its securing a majority in the state legislature) than in the four other states. This is clear evidence that problems related to language and linguistic regions are solved in the measure in which the working class and the peasantry play an effective role in the general democratic movement.

The question of the borders of linguistic states became more live after their formation. In many instances, it has remained dormant, but in others, it has become very acute.

The only democratic principle for the demarcation of the borders is contiguity of language with the village as a unit. Linguistic states do not hang in the air. They rest on solid earth. Hence the application of the principle of linguistic states to the question of their borders demands that border areas should go to the state whose language is spoken by the majority living in such areas, taking the village as a unit.

The central government has never accepted the principle and has dragged in all sorts of factors such as administrative convenience, economic viability and so on for the purpose of its own power politics. In result, it has satisfied none and poured oil into the embers of border conflicts.

The bourgeoisie of the concerned linguistic states have, not exceptionally, taken a principled position, but often, opportunist and jingoist positions as well. The Mysore state rulers, for instance, demand the Kasaragod area from Kerala because it is Kannada speaking and contiguous to Mysore. But they are not prepared to apply the same principle to their border with Maharashtra because there it goes against them. In Punjab, we witnessed the amazing phenomenon of the Punjabi speaking but communally minded Hindus on the border wanting to be excluded from their own linguistic state for fear of domination by the Sikhs. That is an example of the extent to which communalism poisons democratic consciousness and disrupts democratic unity.

Communists and consistent democrats all over the country have alone stood by a principled, democratic solution of all border disputes.

Questions connected with the economic development of the states also call for the laying down of clear, democratic principles and policies based on such principles. Any amount of wrangling and pressure politics goes on in this sphere, with the bourgeoisie of each state defending its demands on grounds suited to its particular interest, which opens the pandora's box

of conflicting parochial bourgeois-landlord rivalry for filling one's own pockets.

For instance, with regard to the distribution of river waters for irrigation, one state would speak of having the biggest catchment area of the river or rivers concerned; another would put forward the plea of a better topographical area for the construction of canals; a third would claim to have a soil which would profit most by irrigation, and so on. In the matter of the procurement of foodgrains and agricultural raw materials, the states generally want no controls over price and procurement in respect of the commodities they produce in surplus, while demanding price control and procurement of commodities of which they have a shortage. In respect of the location of industries, conflicting claims are put forward based on the source of raw materials, transport facilities, export-import facilities, and so on. Industrially developed states claim their proportionate share of the divisible income-tax pool on the basis of the source of the income liable to tax.

The big bourgeoisie, of course, are bothered with no principle and no regional interest whatsoever. Their one principle is that investments should take place where productivity, meaning profits, is highest. The effort to work out democratic principles, and the extent to which they have been worked out, become, in result, a casualty of big bourgeois power politics.

It has become highly urgent for all democratic and progressive forces in the country to work out, by common agreement, key policy directives for the purpose of overcoming economic disparities between the states, and in fact, regional disparities within each state. The guiding principle has to be the more rapid development of the underdeveloped states, based on compelling the monopoly bourgeoisie and the state financial institutions to divert their resources from the more advanced to the backward regions. The motive of private profit has to be replaced by the motive of democratic and even development of all parts of the country.

Only such a policy, applied without discrimination, can

gradually convince all states that due justice is being done to them, and steadily eliminate interstate bitterness and conflict.

Of course, the concrete application of the principle will have to be worked out in greater detail and for various spheres of the national economy. That is where wider consultation and professional study are needed. That can surely be done.

Growing disparities in the economic development of linguistic regions have brought in very grave problems for the working class movement. People in the backward regions naturally emigrate to states with developed industry. But local unemployment being a nationwide phenomenon, such migration leads to conflict between them and the local workers. The industrialists fully exploit this conflict.

It is extremely significant that when the question of forming a unilingual Marathi state with Bombay city as its capital came up, big business in the city, which is predominantly non-Marathi, opposed the inclusion of the city in Maharashtra on the plea that that would be detrimental to the interest of the minority linguistic groups in Bombay.

Today, the same tycoons are the biggest financiers and patrons of the Shiva Sena, the vicious Marathi chauvinistic organisation, which, in the name of defending the interest of the Marathi people, demands the driving out of non-Maharashtrians from the city. The argument put forward by the Shiva Sena is that Maharashtrians themselves have been reduced to a minority in their own city because of outsiders flocking to it for employment.

Regional economic disparities, therefore, while harming the backward regions, are by no means a boon to the working people of the regions which are comparatively more developed.

It has to be accepted as a principle of policy that no one should be compelled, for economic reasons, to migrate from his home state for employment. Even development of all regions is the solution of this problem. Transitionally, a certain priority in employment for the local people should be provisionally provided for.

The question of the link language in India has become a matter of intense controversy and conflict. Here, the problem is not that a democratic solution of the question has not been worked out. The problem is that the failure of the central government to implement it in the early years after independence has led to its aggravation.

The solution is the same as Gandhiji propounded and broadly accepted by Indian democrats. First and foremost, full development of the regional languages and their introduction as languages of state administration and as media of education. Secondly, a gradual introduction of Hindi as the link language with the voluntary consent of people speaking other languages. English will continue as the language of international intercourse.

This objective would have been practically achieved by now but for the central government's economic policies which have accentuated regional disparities, and also because of its failure to insist upon and aid the development of regional languages. Today, the language problem is in a mess because the central and state governments are the biggest employers in the country, and the prospects of employment for youth speaking non-Hindi languages are profoundly connected with the introduction of Hindi as the link language. Now the problem can only be solved gradually with immense patience and sympathy, and that too in the context of the elimination of regional economic disparities and drastic measures for tackling the problem of general unemployment.

More autonomous powers for the states in financial and administrative matters are a vital necessity which, now, is accepted by all democratic elements.

## VI

Lenin pointed out that, to the extent to which problems of national and linguistic inequality can be solved under capitalism, they can be solved only on the basis of thoroughgoing democracy. Their full solution is possible only under socialism.

With the deepening crisis of Indian economy, and in the context of the growing offensive of the forces of right reaction it is becoming abundantly clear that the language question and problems of regional economic disparities can be solved in India only if they are linked to the general struggle for democracy and socialism. Delinked from this basic struggle, attempts to solve them only create further complications and give rise to disruptive conflicts within the forces of democracy and socialism. They also give a handle to reactionary forces to pursue their nefarious ends.

A thorough democratisation of Indian economy is the key and basic condition for the removal of mass unemployment from which people in all regions and speaking all the languages of the country suffer. It is the condition for the faster economic development of the backward regions and states and hence for the eradication of regional disparities. It is the condition for a just and democratic solution of the language problem that will strengthen the forces of national unity and integration on the basis of the development of all our languages. It is also the condition for giving a powerful blow to the forces of foreign private capital, Indian monopoly capital and landlordism which are the basic forces which accentuate and vitiate the problem of languages and regional disparities in the country.

While every effort has to be made to lessen linguistic and regional tensions, and find provisional, transitional solutions for them on our path towards full democracy and socialism, priority has to be given to the basic economic and democratic struggles of all the working people and toiling peasantry in the country. This is not a question of neglecting linguistic and regional problems. Fundamentally, it is a question of creating the basic sanctions and conditions which alone can enable us to find their transitional solutions, what to speak of their ultimate and completely satisfactory solution.

The key role in the entire process has to be played, and can only be played by the working class. Its very conditions of life and work compel the working class to forge its solidarity irrespective of religion, caste, race or language, against every

kind of exploitation, oppression, discrimination and injustice. The history of our working class movement is testimony to this fact, and it has been one of the proudest achievements of our proletarian movement.

Today, other democratic forces and classes are also realising, more and more, the dire necessity of unifying all popular forces in the country against the economic, social, political and ideological offensive of reaction. But for that very reason, reaction is also attempting to disrupt our working class movement by injecting into it the poison of communalism and interlingual hatred.

Under the conditions it has become a key task for communists and our trade union movement to conduct powerful political campaigns in the working class explaining to it the correct solutions of problems related to language and regional disparities and unify the workers on these issues as well, exposing and isolating the provocative and disruptive policies of linguistic chauvinists.

It is the historic task of the working class to fight most consistently for democracy and socialism, to fight for the fullest democratisation of every sphere of social life, to fight for democracy as an inseparable part of the struggle for socialism.

# LENIN And the State

N. K. KRISHNAN

The nature of the state as an *instrument of political power* occupies a central place in Marxist theory. Lenin not only performed the historic service of rescuing the doctrines of Marx and Engels on the state from distortion and repudiation by the opportunists of the Second International. He was also the builder of the first victorious socialist state in human history. Generalising its experience he carried forward the heritage of Marx and Engels into the new epoch, the epoch of imperialism and of the proletarian revolutions and drew conclusions that have stood the test of history in succeeding socialist revolutions.

Refuting the attacks of the opportunists on the one hand and of the anarchists on the other against Marxism, Lenin pointed out:

> "Marxism recognises a class struggle as fully developed... only if it does not merely embrace politics but takes in the most significant thing in politics—the organisation of state power" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 19, p. 122).

There were diverse points of view on the nature of the state in Lenin's time, as there are today. Some, as Lenin noted, believed that the state is something given from heaven, a certain "mystic", "absolute" force which restricts the actions of the people. Others considered the state the root of all evil and declared its abolition as their prime goal. Still others deemed the state an embodiment of the people's will. There were also those who regarded the state as an organisation for guarding public order and, like a night watchman, protecting the peace of its citizens, the custodian of law and order.

Some demanded the creation of a powerful state, others—an "absolute democracy". There were people who thought: "The less power, the better."

There are repetitions and variations of all these trends in the modern world also.

Not a single one of these diverse views of bourgeois ideologists and idealist philosophers on the nature of the state could provide a scientific answer to the question of the relationship between the economic system of society and the state, the class nature of the state, the laws governing its formation and development, its function and purpose.

## I

Marx and Engels, the founders of scientific socialism, were the first to develop a scientific theory of the state; Lenin elaborated the Marxian theory of the state in conformity with the new historical conditions of imperialism and the socialist revolution. He worked out the cardinal problems of the theory of the state: its class character, origin and development, its types and forms, its activity and functions. Following Marx and Engels, Lenin showed that political power is organised rule of one class over another and that "the state is a machine for maintaining the rule of one class over another" (*Selected Works*, Three Volume Edn., Moscow, 1967, Vol. 3, p. 250).

Lenin pointed out that the state as an instrument of political power in a class society has a number of specific features

and that it is a system of institutions created by the ruling class—a whole army of legislators, judges, lawyers, civil servants, policemen, military, etc. to protect and actively defend the rule of the exploiting minority.

An essential feature of the state in class society is the separation of the apparatus of power from the people. The state

> "has always been a certain apparatus which stood outside society and consisted of a group of people engaged solely, or almost solely, or mainly, in ruling. People are divided into the ruled, and into specialists in ruling, those who rise above society and are called rulers, statesmen. This... group of people who rule others, always possesses a certain means of coercion, of physical force, irrespective of whether this violence over people is expressed in the primitive club, or in more perfected types of weapons in the epoch of slavery, or in the fire arms... or, finally, in modern weapons, which in the twentieth century are technical marvels..." (*Ibid.*, p. 249).

Pointing out that the essence of the state is manifested in its two main functions, *internal* and *external*, Lenin drew attention to the fact that the *internal* function of the state, in class society, is implemented both by means of direct coercion as well as by *spiritual and ideological pressure*. The modern bourgeois state has perfected the weapons of spiritual and ideological pressure and uses a wide network of propaganda for this purpose—the press, cinema, radio and TV, theatre and literature.

Pointing out that an essential feature of the state is its inseparable connection with law, Lenin drew attention to the fact that law is nothing but the form regulating the behaviour of people, the sum total of the norms of behaviour set and approved by the state with the aim of preserving economic, social and political order in the given society—that it is nothing but *the will of the ruling class raised to the level of law*.

## II

Following Marx and Engels, Lenin traced out the main historical types of state and political regimes.

States differ depending on what class they serve and on the economic foundation of society. The type of state expresses its class essence, while its form expresses how power is specifically organised:

"The forms of state were extremely varied. As early as the period of slavery we find diverse forms of the state in the countries that were the most advanced, cultured and civilised according to the standards of the time—for example, in ancient Greece and Rome—which were based entirely on slavery. At that time there was already difference between monarchy and republic, between autocracy and democracy... All these differences arose in the epoch of slavery. Despite these differences, the state of the slaveowning epoch was a slaveowning state, irrespective of whether it was a monarchy or a republic, aristocratic or democratic" (*Ibid.*, p. 250-51).

"....rebellions, or even strong ferment, among the slaves in ancient times at once revealed the fact that the ancient state was essentially a *dictatorship of the slaveowners*" (*Ibid.*, p. 48).

"The change in the form of exploitation transformed the slaveowning state into the feudal state... And here too the forms of state varied, here too we find both the monarchy and the republic, although the latter was much more weakly expressed. But always the feudal lord was regarded as the only ruler. The peasant serfs were deprived of absolutely all political rights" (*Ibid.*, p. 252).

"...the feudal state was then superseded by the capitalist state, which proclaims liberty for the whole people as its slogan, which declares that it expresses the will of the whole people..." (*Ibid.*, p. 254).

"The republic is one possible form of the political superstructure of capitalist society, and, moreover, under presentday conditions the most democratic form" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 23, p. 45).

"Yet, the state continued to be a machine which helped the capitalists to hold the poor peasants and the working class in subjection" (*Selected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 255).

"Bourgeois states are most varied in form, but their essence is the same: all these states, whatever their form, in the final analysis are inevitably the *dictatorship of the bourgeoisie*" (*Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 292).

"History knows of bourgeois democracy which takes the place of feudalism, and of proletarian democracy which takes the place of bourgeois democracy" (*Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 54).

Thus did Lenin trace the various types of state that have emerged and fallen in the history of class society.

But, even while pointing out the class nature of the state and in particular the class limitations of bourgeois democracy, while pointing out that if the working people have to choose between socialist and bourgeois democracy they would unquestionably prefer the former; at the same time, Lenin assessed the different forms of government in the bourgeois state, proceeding from the interests of the proletariat and emphasised the importance of the fight for democracy from the standpoint of the struggle for socialism.

"There are bourgeois democratic regimes like the one in Germany, and also like the one in England; like the one in Austria and also like those in America and Switzerland. He would be a fine Marxist indeed who in a period of democratic revolution failed to see this difference between the degrees of democratism and the difference between its forms..." (*Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 488).

The close interlinking and interconnection between the struggle for democracy and the struggle for socialism is one of

the fundamental propositions of Leninism. This acquires special significance in the present era of development of state monopoly capitalism and the increased domination of monopolies in the economic, political and cultural spheres.

## III

"But we have a right to be and are proud that to us has fallen the good fortune to *begin* the building of a Soviet state, and thereby to *usher in* a new era in world history, the era of the rule of a *new* class, a class which is oppressed in every capitalist country, but which everywhere is marching forward towards a new life, towards victory over the bourgeoisie, towards the dictatorship of the proletariat, towards the emancipation of mankind from the yoke of capital and from imperialist wars" (*Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 639).

"If we translate the Latin, scientific, historico-philosophical term 'dictatorship of the proletariat' into simpler language, it means just the following:

"Only a definite class, namely the urban workers and the factory, industrial workers in general, is able to lead the whole mass of the working and exploited people in the struggle to throw off the yoke of capital, in actually carrying it out, in the struggle to maintain and consolidate the victory, in the work of creating the new, socialist social system and in the entire struggle for the complete abolition of classes" (*Ibid.*, p. 213).

"Only the proletariat—by virtue of the economic role it plays in largescale production—is capable of being the leader of *all* the working and exploited people..." (*Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 285).

"...socialism can be implemented only *through* the dictatorship of the proletariat, which combines violence against the bourgeoisie, i.e. the minority of the population, with *full* development of democracy, i.e. the genuinely equal and genuinely universal participation of the *entire* mass of the population in all *state* affairs and in all the

complex problems of abolishing capitalism" (*Against Dogmatism and Sectarianism in the Working Class Movement*, Moscow, 1968, p. 77).

The October Revolution, under Lenin's leadership, created a political organisation of society which was new in principle and a socialist state which differed basically from states of the exploiter societies. From its very inception, the Soviet state expressed the interests of the working people; it proclaimed peace; the toiling masses acquired power, the peasants, land; and the oppressed nations freedom and equality.

Lenin elaborated the question of the functions of the socialist state. He summed up the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the power of the working class which is established as the result of the socialist revolution and has as its goal the building of socialism and the transition to the building of communism.

In the *economic* sphere, the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat abolishes private ownership of the means and instruments of production and introduces planned organisation of production for the allround development and welfare of the people. Lenin pointed out time and again that the essence of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which expresses the people's interests and leans on their revolutionary initiative and activity, lies *not in compulsion, but in creative work*, the peaceful implementation of profound social transformations and the building of socialist economy.

In the *political and social sphere*, the socialist state abolishes class exploitation, broadens the social basis of the state system, strengthens the union of workers and peasants, brings socialist culture within the reach of the masses and draws ever wider masses into governing society, developing in every way proletarian, socialist, democracy.

The proletarian state, in Lenin's opinion, should inevitably be democratic in a new way (i.e., for the proletariat and other working masses of town and country) and dictatorial in a new way (i.e. against the bourgeoisie); democratic because this state,

for the first time in human history, expresses the will and interests of the real majority, and dictatorial because it has necessarily to overcome and suppress the resistance of the exploiters, even in order to ensure and guarantee democracy for the majority.

In the *military sphere*, the socialist state has to strengthen its defences and armed forces. It has to create its own regular Red Army, mighty punitive bodies and implement extraordinary measures necessary for the defence of revolutionary transformation of society.

Lenin stated that the dictatorship of the proletariat is a "special form of its *class alliance with the peasantry and other exploited masses*". In the process of building socialist society the working class has to reeducate the masses. For the proletariat to be able to lead the peasantry and all the petty bourgeois strata, Lenin wrote, it needs power, organisation and discipline.

Lenin emphasised that the socialist state has to set up a *new machinery of state administration* and draw the broadest masses of the working people into the task of administration, to unleash the gigantic creative forces of the millions of workers, peasants and intelligentsia. He attached exceptional importance to organising genuine people's control over the activity of the state apparatus and demanded that all working people be drawn into it. He said: "We want a government to be always under the supervision of the public opinion of its country" (*Selected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 464).

Stressing the enormous importance of the principle of collectivism in state management and reliance on popular experience, Lenin wrote:

> "Collective experience, the experience of millions, can alone give us decisive guidance in this respect, precisely because, for our task, for the task of building socialism, the experience of the hundreds and hundreds of thousands of those upper sections which have made history up to now in feudal society and in capitalist society is insufficient" (*Ibid.*, p. 728).

In socialist society, in the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the workers and peasants thus have the real right

and opportunity to form all the bodies of state power and economic management as well as to control their activities. Explaining the significance of this democratic principle of social organisation, Lenin pointed out that "every representative of the masses, every citizen, must be put in such conditions that he can participate in the discussion of state laws, in the choice of his representatives and in the implementation of state laws" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 212).

Lenin associated implementation of this task with the need of teaching the working people to manage state affairs. He stressed that Soviet rule was a means of teaching the masses to govern the state and organise production on a new basis.

While working out problems of the socialist state, Lenin paid great attention to questions of Soviet law. He made it clear that the main principle of socialist law is consolidation of the political power of the working people headed by the working class and protection of socialist property.

Through these various principles enunciated by him—in the course of, and generalising on the experiences of, building up the new Soviet state—*Lenin laid bare the essence of socialist democracy, democracy of the socialist state, as qualitatively different from bourgeois democracy, democracy of the capitalist state.* "...we cannot speak of 'pure democracy' as long as different *classes* exist; we can only speak of *class* democracy" said Lenin (*Selected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 54).

## IV

The question of the dictatorship of the proletariat has always been in the centre of the ideological struggle of Marxism-Leninism against all varieties of revisionism and dogmatism. Even in recent times, "theoreticians" have appeared in different countries who attack the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat as outdated today and neither desirable nor practicable as a form of transition from capitalism to socialism.

The teaching on the world historical mission of the proletariat as the builder of socialism constitutes the heart of Marx-

ism-Leninism. It is in the working class, the most powerful, most advanced and most revolutionary class of modern society, that the founders of scientific socialism saw the only revolutionary force capable of destroying capitalism and leading humanity to socialism. The history of the world of the past century has amply confirmed and corroborated this.

Lenin pointed out that the working class performs its historical role at all stages of the emancipatory struggle: it is the leading force of all the working people in the revolution, the dominant class (proletarian dictatorship) in the period of transition from capitalism to socialism and the guiding force of socialist society until the final transition to full communism.

The concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat is the basic, logical, historically corroborated conclusion deriving from the Marxist theory of the historical mission of the working class, Lenin categorically stated: "Only he is a Marxist who *extends* the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*. This is what constitutes the most profound distinction between the Marxist and the ordinary petty (as well as big) bourgeois" (*Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 292).

After the Second World War, the view was propounded in some Central and East European countries that transition to socialism was possible without the dictatorship of the proletariat. Revisionist concepts of this nature stemmed from underestimation of the resistance offered by the exploiter classes. Under the influence of historical experience, already by 1948, the thesis concerning progress towards socialism in these countries "without the dictatorship of the proletariat" was abandoned and replaced with the thesis of the two forms of proletarian dictatorship—the Soviet and the people's democratic. The experience of the October Revolution was thus carried forward; the Leninist principle of the leading role of the working class in the socialist revolution and in building socialism was confirmed.

"The transition from capitalism to communism is certainly bound to yield a tremendous abundance and variety of poli-

tical forms, but the essence will inevitably be the same: *the dictatorship of the proletariat*", Lenin said (*Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 292).

The experience of the past half century has shown that not a single country has achieved socialism without the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The revolution, Lenin said, is only worth something when it can defend itself, defend itself politically, economically, ideologically, defend itself militarily, against both the encroachments of counterrevolution inside the country and of international imperialism, without the support of which internal counterrevolutionary forces could never and can never raise their head. Lenin most resolutely came out against the underestimation of the danger of counterrevolution as an instrument and social base of world imperialism.

> "The abolition of classes requires a long, difficult and stubborn *class struggle*, which, *after* the overthrow of capitalist rule, *after* the destruction of the bourgeois state, *after* the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, *does not disappear* (as the vulgar representatives of the old socialism and the old social democracy imagine), but merely changes its forms and in many respects becomes fiercer" (*Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 198).

The experience of the armed counterrevolution in Hungary in 1956; the experiences of the "quiet counterrevolution", a term which one may use to describe the modern imperialist strategy for seeking to undermine and subvert the socialist regime in the socialist countries beginning with Czechoslovakia; these fully validate the force even today of what Lenin accurately warned about, as far back as 1919.

It is no doubt true that the socialist revolution gives a powerful impetus to social progress. But those ideologues are deeply mistaken who maintain that the initial impulse is sufficient to set society moving towards socialism of itself, by its own momentum, so to speak, without the dictatorship of the proletariat, without state leadership from the working class. The essence of

the matter is that there can be no "automatic", "spontaneous" evolution towards socialism. Socialism has to be *built* and in the building of it the dictatorship of the proletariat is the main instrument. This is the essence of Lenin's teaching on this crucial question.

## V

"... socialism is opposed to violence against men in general", said Lenin (*Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 92). But to claim that socialism is opposed to revolutionary violence, he continued, means being a philistine who renounces revolution. Lenin demanded that revolutionary violence be distinguished from reactionary, counterrevolutionary violence. Revolutionary violence against the exploiters is in fact defence against violence on their part, on the part of counterrevolution. It is, in fact, defence of the revolution, defence of socialism.

In this connection, Lenin emphasised: "the dictatorship of the proletariat is not only the use of force... The economic foundation of this use of revolutionary force, the guarantee of its effectiveness and success is the fact that the proletariat represents and creates a higher type of social organisation of labour compared with capitalism... this is the source of the strength and the guarantee that the final triumph of communism is inevitable" (*Ibid.*, p. 212).

Lenin pointed out the possibility and desirability of a peaceful form of socialist revolution, a peaceful way of winning power. The peaceful way of the development of revolution is possible if the revolutionary forces are far stronger than the ruling classes and can muster such preponderant strength on their side as to paralyse the resistance of the exploiting classes effectively, making it unnecessary for the proletariat to resort to extreme forms of struggle.

In this respect, Lenin with great vision pointed out that the future conditions of the path to the victory of the working class and socialism in other countries would not be the same as in the Soviet Union, which had to face the heaviest obstacles and

the most implacable opposition, as the pioneers of the socialist revolution.

> "We had to exercise the dictatorship of the proletariat in its harshest form" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 28, p. 207).
>
> "Russia may have to make greater sacrifices than other countries; this is not surprising considering the chaos that we inherited. Other countries will travel by a different, more humane road, but at the end of it lies the same Soviet power" (*Ibid.*, Vol. 29, p. 271).

Thus, even as far back as 1919, Lenin presented his perspective of the future "different, more humane road" to socialism in other countries, after the harsh, pioneering experience of the Soviet Union. But he did not fail to add that through all the variety of roads and forms, the reality of the political power of the working class remains indispensable. Half a century of experience has now abundantly proved in practice this perspective presented by Lenin, with the multifarious variety of forms, according to varying national conditions and traditions, in the advance to socialism. The new world balance of forces that has emerged after the Second World War has also enlarged the possibilities of the peaceful path towards socialism. But all this experience has equally shown that any weakening of the indispensable common principle in all cases, *the political power of the working class, leading the alliance of all the working people against imperialism and reaction*, can put in jeopardy the whole advance itself and even lead to temporary victory of counter-revolution and reaction.

Lenin's theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat is thus an integrated whole, based upon *socialist humanism* and its indissoluble links with the class struggle of the working class and its defence of socialism against all counterrevolutionary forces. Revisionist theoreticians have appeared in some countries in the recent period who want to revise Leninism in the name of "humanism", who want to "humanise socialism". As they see it, humanism stands "above" classes, is incompatible with revolutionary violence or any restriction of the "rights of the

individual" as dictated by the demands of socialist society. They seize on the fact that bureaucratic distortions of the norms of socialism and violations of socialist legality have taken place in socialist countries and sometimes assumed considerable proportions; and from this they want to draw conclusions that would repudiate the dictatorship of the proletariat itself and the very essence of Leninism.

It is necessary to combat these revisionist theories and emphasise that what is really needed is not the "introduction of humane principles" into socialism (by which is really meant repudiation of the core of Leninism), but the *elimination of everything extraneous that contradicts the nature of socialism*, its humane character and the revolutionary role that socialism and its Leninist ideology play in historical development.

## VI

> "The party is the leader, the vanguard of the proletariat, which rules directly" (*Selected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 540).

In these words, Lenin pointed out the leading role of the Communist Party in the socialist state and the system of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is one of the basic propositions of Leninism concerning the socialist state and the construction of socialism.

This proposition too has stood the test of history and was once again strikingly confirmed by the tragic experiences of the events that took place in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The wrong bureaucratic practices that had developed in Czechoslovakia in the later stages of the Novotny regime when the Communist Party began to act as a rule by command, bypassing the elected state organs, trade unions and mass organisations, or treating them as mere rubber stamps, led in the subsequent period, as throwback, to revisionist concepts of *contraposing* the role of the class to the role of the party and repudiation of the leading role of the party itself, concepts which led to dangerous consequences.

It must be emphasised in this connection that Lenin's formulation always brought out the interrelation of the party and the class, and more fully, the triple unity of the party-class-mass. with the party, not as itself the basis of power, for the power is the power of the working class, but as "the vanguard of the proletariat which rules directly".

Lenin had time and again insisted that any weakening or rupture of any link in the correct interrelation of this triple unity of the party-class-mass would be fatal. One may recall Rosa Luxemburg's rejection of the Leninist theory of the party, which she criticised as the "setting up of an elite" over the working class and her advocacy, instead, of the "independent action" of the working class as a class without a Leninist party—which reached its fatal outcome in the events of December 1918. Similarly, from the opposite end, the bourgeois liberals had issued, at the time of the Kronstadt mutiny, the revealing slogan of "Soviet power without the communists"!

The experience of socialist construction so far in every country has conclusively proved that any tendency to repudiate the leading role of the party or to dilute this conception into that of a kind of "moral guide and exhorter", in some form or other, would have dangerous consequences for the fate of socialism itself.

This does not, of course, mean prescribing a uniform straitjacket pattern of political form for the socialist state for every country, irrespective of its specific national peculiarities and traditions.

In fact, Lenin himself never limited the dictatorship of the proletariat to any specific form. He had the vision to see that the worldwide advance to socialism is bound to produce a great multitude and variety of political forms.

> "All nations will arrive at socialism—this is inevitable, but all will do so in not exactly the same way, each will contribute something of its own to some form of democracy, to some variety of the dictatorship of the proletariat, to the

varying rate of socialist transformations in the different aspects of social life" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 23, pp. 69-70).

Lenin noted that while the essence of political power, which is a means of transition to socialism, is the same, its forms and methods can be very diverse, reflecting individual features of the concrete historical conditions of the transition to socialism in the given country.

The development of events has confirmed the correctness of Lenin's prediction.

After the Second World War, the dictatorship of the proletariat appeared in a number of countries in the form of *people's democracy*. In the majority of these countries, people's democracy as a form of government is associated with a multi-party system, with the support of a national front embracing all mass organisations which recognise and accept the programme of building socialism. The forms and methods of democracy reflect specific features of the historical conditions in a given country that has embarked on the road to socialism. But the leading role of the Communist party remains an essential constituent of the process of building socialism.

Similarly, there is no doubt that in the case of newly independent countries too a variety of political forms will be thrown up, depending on national peculiarities and traditions, including those corresponding to the transition to socialism through national democracy. But the class essence of the dictatorship of the proletariat, with the role of the party in it, will remain and is always the same. Political power is vested in the working class which is in close alliance with all working people; and the party is the vanguard of the working class.

(24 *February* 1970)

# LENIN

# And Revolution

MOHIT SEN

Lenin creatively developed all the three fundamental aspects of Marxism—philosophy, political economy and scientific socialism. His defence of the revolutionary essence of the teaching of Marx against the revisionist emasculation of it was inextricably linked with his constant creative development of this teaching. Defence and development always formed an integral dialectical whole of Lenin's method.

Nowhere is this more evident than in Lenin's elaboration of the strategy and tactics of revolution. Lenin's supreme historical achievement is, undoubtedly, the leading of the Bolsheviks who headed the revolutionary onslaught of the tremendous October of 1917. But it is the height of absurdity to imagine that this was "only" a matter of "practical politics". Revolution is even more of a science than it is an art.

If we are to even begin to attempt an appreciation of Lenin as a revolutionary the very first thing we must do is to remove from our mind all the oversimplified formulas and mystic phrases that have, unfortunately, captivated the mind of a

section of our petty bourgeois youth. It will not do to equate the intricate science and art of revolution with the magical incantation "all power flows from the barrel of a gun". Nor will it do to isolate Lenin's actions in the stormy autumn of 1917 from the entire range of his theoretical work in the preceding two decades. The unity of theory and practice (or revolutionising practice) is precisely the unity of theory as well as practice. About no one and nothing is this so true as of Lenin and his greatest deed.

Therefore, it will not be out of place to begin our survey of Lenin and his concept and practice of revolution by turning to *What Is To Be Done?* published as long ago as 1902. This is one of the greatest works in the entire history of man's endeavour for emancipation, deserving to rank with *The Communist Manifesto*. It is in this book that Lenin, then only 32 years old, works out the problem of the transition of the working class as a "class in itself" to a "class for itself". The concept of praxis, which is so much talked about these days, has never been so splendidly embodied as in this book which seeks to settle burning problems of the "practical" movement. And the most important of all these problems is that of revolutionary consciousness—its genesis and its role.

As is characteristic of all Lenin's writings, he goes straight to the heart of the problem:

> "Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. This idea cannot be insisted too strongly at a time when the fashionable preaching of opportunism goes hand in hand with an infatuation for the narrowest forms of practical activity" (*Selected Works*, Three Volume edition, Moscow, 1967, Vol. 1, p. 117).

These words are quoted often enough but their implication is not understood nearly so often. Lenin was at that time struggling against the trend called "economism". The representatives of this trend stressed "practice", insisted that the social democrats (as the Marxists called themselves at that time) should concentrate upon the "immediate" tasks of the

movement, should stress "realisable" goals. It was their contention that out of all this the working class would "spontaneously" arrive at revolutionary, socialist consciousness. "Practice" would automatically give rise to the necessary "theory". It is quite wrong to imagine that economism connotes only insistence upon struggle for economic demands. Economism is much more than that. It is based on a certain concept of the link between theory and practice, between struggle and consciousness. It holds that any practice, or rather the most elementary forms of practice of the class struggle, will automatically produce Marxist "theory" and "revolutionary" consciousness. One certainly cannot say that this approach is not to be found in many quarters.

Lenin, that greatest of all practical revolutionaries, demolished the basis of this approach. He states:

> "The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e. the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc. The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals. By their social status, the founders of modern scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia. In the very same way, in Russia, the theoretical doctrine of social democracy arose altogether independently of the spontaneous growth of the working class movement; it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of the development of thought among the revolutionary socialist intelligentsia...
>
> "Hence, we had both the spontaneous awakening of the working masses, their awakening to conscious life and conscious struggle, and a revolutionary youth, armed with social democratic theory and straining towards the workers" (*Ibid.*, pp. 122-23).

The experience of the communist movement in India and elsewhere would confirm the truth of these observations. But it is not confirmation that is really important. Lenin scarcely requires any certificates from anybody as to the validity of his ideas! What is of real importance is the implication of these observations, their importance as a norm, as a criterion for review. Spontaneity continues to be spontaneously believed in and the contempt for theory persists. Or, at best, it is felt that the holding of a few study classes and of a few "political" meetings solves the problem of imparting revolutionary consciousness to the working class since that class is in any case always engaged in struggle. The fear of generalisation, of drawing and imparting the lessons, not only of the struggles engaged in directly by the workers, of the entire range of the experience of the given revolutionary movement, dominates many a "practical" mind.

Lenin had worked out the answer to this problem as well:

> "While fully recognising the political struggle (better: the political desires and demands of the workers), which arises spontaneously from the working class movement itself, it (*Rabochaya Mysl*, one of the organs of Economists—M.S.) absolutely refuses *independently to work out* a specifically *social democratic politics* corresponding to the general tasks of socialism and to presentday conditions in Russia" (*Ibid.*, p. 133).

Further:

> "The fact that the economic interests play a decisive role *does not in the least imply* that the economic (i.e. the trade union) struggle is of prime importance; for the most essential, the 'decisive' interests of classes can be satisfied *only* by radical *political* changes in general. In particular the fundamental economic interests of the proletariat can be satisfied only by a political revolution that will replace the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by the dictatorship of the proletariat" (*Ibid.*, pp. 135-36 n).

He goes on to refute the notion that economic struggle is the best way to draw the workers into political struggle:

> "Is it true that, in general, the economic struggle 'is the most widely applicable means' of drawing the masses into the political struggle? It is entirely untrue. *Any and every* manifestation of police tyranny and autocratic outrage, not only in connection with the economic struggle, is not one whit less 'widely applicable' as a means of 'drawing in' the masses. . .
>
> "Thus, the pompous phrase about 'lending the economic struggle *itself* a political character', which sounds so 'terrifically' profound and revolutionary, serves as a screen to conceal what is in fact the traditional striving to *degrade* social democratic politics to the level of trade union politics.. .
>
> " 'Economic' concessions (or pseudoconcessions) are, of course, the cheapest and most advantageous from the government's point of view, because by these means it hopes to win the confidence of the working masses. For this very reason, we social democrats *must* not under any circumstances or in any way whatever create grounds for the belief (or the misunderstanding) that we attach greater value to economic reforms, or that we regard them as particularly important, etc." (*Ibid.*, pp. 145, 148, 149-50).

How then is political consciousness to be spread among the workers? To this question, too, Lenin provides a clear answer:

> "Working class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to *all* cases of tyranny, oppression, violence and abuse, no matter *what class* is affected—unless they are trained, moreover, to respond from a social democratic point of view and no other. The consciousness of the working masses cannot be genuine class consciousness, unless the workers learn, from concrete, and above all from topical, political facts and events to observe *every* other social class in *all* the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical and political life; unless

they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of *all* aspects of the life and activity of *all* classes, strata and groups of the population. Those who concentrate the attention, observation and consciousness of the working class exclusively, or even mainly, upon itself alone are not social democrats; for the selfknowledge of the working class is indissolubly bound up, not solely with a fully clear theoretical understanding—or rather, not so much with the theoretical, as with the practical, understanding—of the relationships between *all* the various classes of modern society, acquired through the experience of political life. For this reason the conception of the economic struggle as the most widely applicable means of drawing the masses into the political movement, which our Economists preach, is so extremely harmful and reactionary in its practical significance" (*Ibid.*, pp. 154-55).

Lenin goes on to concretise this approach and to reemphasise points made earlier:

"Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers *only from without*, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers. The sphere from which alone it is possible to obtain this knowledge is the sphere of relationships of *all* classes and strata to the state and the government, the sphere of the interrelations between *all* classes... To bring political knowledge to the workers the social democrats must go *among all classes of the population*; they must dispatch units of their army *in all directions*" (*Ibid.*, p. 163).

He adds that the most widespread type of the social democratic study circle

"has 'contacts with the workers' and rests content with this, issuing leaflets in which abuses in the factories, the government's partiality towards the capitalists, and the tyranny of the police are strongly condemned. At workers' meetings the discussions never, or rarely ever, go beyond,

> the limits of these subjects, Extremely rare are the lectures and discussions held on the history of the revolutionary movement, on questions of the government's home and foreign policy, on questions of the economic evolution of Russia and of Europe, on the position of various classes in modern society, etc. As to systematically acquiring and extending contact with other classes of society, no one even dreams of that. In fact, the ideal leader, as the majority of the members of such circles picture him, is something far more in the nature of a trade union secretary than a socialist political leader... It cannot be too strongly maintained that this is still not social democracy, that the social democrat's ideal should not be the trade union secretary, but *the tribune of the people*, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalise all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth *before all* his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for *all* and everyone the world historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat (*Ibid.*, pp. 163-64).

It is on the basis of this objective fact that ideological political consciousness has to be inculcated in the working class from outside the realm of its immediate economic class conflict, that Lenin based his concept of the vanguard party. The Marxist party of the working class was to be the very embodiment of revolutionary practice, of the unity of theory and practice, of praxis. And that is why Lenin was so passionately indignant when the Economists sought to lower the party to the level of a militant strike committee or trade union. This would be precisely to betray the working class and its world historic mission of emancipating all mankind from exploitation.

It is wrong to imagine that Lenin conceived of the party or its leadership as representing intellectuals who would provide

the "head" or the "brain" while the workers would provide the "hands" or the "brawn". It was misunderstanding of this kind that led Rosa Luxemburg, at one time, to contrast Leninism to Marxism. And it is one of the favourite themes of both the presentday right reformists as well as certain sections of the ultraleft, that the communists destroy the spontaneous struggle of the workers by imposing a party upon them, by "bureaucratising" the struggle of the workers. These accusations made some six decades after *What Is To Be Done?* was written are based entirely on equating spontaneity and consciousness, on overlooking that spontaneity, the spontaneous movement of the masses contains consciousness in embryo but not more than that. In the end this equation explodes into its opposite, into setting spontaneity against consciousness, the workers against their party.

Lenin has, on the other hand, seen the dialectical relation between the two and written:

> "the spontaneity of the masses demands a high degree of consciousness from us, social democrats. The greater the spontaneous upsurge of the masses, the more widespread the movement, the more rapid, incomparably so, the demand for greater consciousness in the theoretical, political and organisational work of the social democracy" (*Ibid.*, p. 141).

It is not as if Lenin had said that consciousness of its world historic mission could be imparted to the working class without its spontaneous movement. It is precisely the building upon and transformation of the spontaneous movement that is the point which he emphasised. The spontaneous movement was essential to realise that it was neither enough nor could it on its own develop the consciousness of those who participated in it to revolutionary consciousness.

It is interesting, incidentally, to note that Lenin makes an interesting comparison between economism and terrorism. He states:

> "The Economists and the presentday terrorists have one common root, namely, *subservience to spontaneity*... The

> Economists and the terrorists merely bow to different poles of spontaneity; the Economists bow to the spontaneity of 'the labour movement pure and simple', while the terrorists bow to the spontaneity of the passionate indignation of intellectuals, who lack the ability or opportunity to connect the revolutionary struggle and the working class movement into an integral whole...
>
> "Calls to terror and calls to lend the economic struggle itself a political character are merely two different forms of *evading* the most pressing duty now resting upon the Russian revolutionaries, namely, the organisation of comprehensive political agitation" (*Ibid.*, pp. 159 & 161).

Those who talk so glibly of revisionism and neorevisionism may kindly take note. And, let it be said, they may kindly take some time off to read the major works, at any rate, of the greatest fighter against revisionism history has yet produced.

We would have liked to have passed on to an examination of *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* where a discussion takes place of the organisational principles to give full body and shape to the concept of the vanguard party. This would, however, be the subject of a separate essay in this volume.

## II

In 1905 the revolutionary storm burst and as always Lenin participated in it not only as an energetic organiser and agitator but as a theoretician. He displayed again the uncanny knack of being able to swiftly generalise the seething and fresh experience of the millions so that this generalisation could become a guide to further revolutionising practice.

The finest product of such theoretical endeavour was *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*. This book, again, will stand in the same category as the celebrated *Eighteenth Brumaire* and *Civil War in France* of Marx. In this book Lenin sets out and answers the cardinal problems that confront the working class and its vanguard party in the period of the democratic revolution. He sets out and solves the prob-

lems of how to further the direct class aims of the proletariat in the presocialist stage of the revolution, how to combine the proletariat's class tasks with the general tasks of the accomplishment of the democratic revolution. In its general features, these problems continue to confront large segments of the world communist movement whether in the advanced capitalist states (the antimonopoly front) or in the newly independent states (the national democratic front).

Lenin begins with a typical "activist" or "interventionist" statement:

> "Undoubtedly, the revolution will teach us, and will teach the masses of the people. But the question that now confronts a militant political party is: shall we be able to teach the revolution anything?" (*Ibid.*, p. 458)

But in order to "teach" the revolution anything it was essential to be clear about its basic character:

> "The degree of Russia's economic development (an objective condition), and the degree of class consciousness and organisation of the broad masses of the proletariat (a subjective condition inseparably bound up with the objective condition) make the immediate and complete emancipation of the working class impossible... We are all convinced that the emancipation of the working classes must be won by the working classes themselves; a socialist revolution is out of the question unless the masses become class conscious and organised, trained and educated in an open class struggle against the entire bourgeoisie... Whoever wants to reach socialism by any other path than that of political democracy, will inevitably arrive at conclusions that are absurd and reactionary both in the economic and political sense. If any workers ask us at the appropriate moment why we should not go ahead and carry out our maximum programme we shall answer by pointing out how far from socialism the masses of the democratically minded people still are, how undeveloped class antagonisms still are, and how unorganised the proletarians still are" (*Ibid.*, pp. 467-68).

This, in a sense, was nothing new. The Marxists of Russia, as well as the leadership of the Second International, had come to the conclusion quite some time before the publication of *Two Tactics* that in Russia the first stage of the revolution would not be socialist but bourgeois democratic. The tremendous new contribution that Lenin made was to define a new type of bourgeois democratic revolution in the specific conditions of tsarist Russia where the liberal bourgeoisie had inherent weaknesses and where it confronted not only tsarist autocracy, or even not so much tsarist autocracy, but also the working class. It was, therefore, a situation where the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution had to be completed at a far higher level of antagonism between the working class and the bourgeoisie than at any previous, higher than the 1848 revolution in Germany which had been analysed by Marx and Engels and which was the only historical precedent available at the time. This gave rise to any amount of ideological confusion in the ranks of the Social Democratic Labour Party in Russia as well as in the Second International. The Mensheviks, the inheritors of the sorry tradition of the Economists, came out with the stereotyped dogmatic formulations that since the revolution was bourgeois democratic in character, it had necessarily to be led by the liberal bourgeoisie with the working class playing a subsidiary role and doing nothing to scare away the bourgeoisie. Only after the victory of the bourgeoisie would the working class really come into its historic role.

It was against this dogmatic approach, which ignored the realities of Russia of the times and which belittled the political role of the working class, that Lenin turned the fullness of his polemical prowess. He states:

> "The outcome of the revolution depends on whether the working class will play the part of a subsidiary to the bourgeoisie, a subsidiary that is powerful in the force of its onslaught against the autocracy, but impotent politically, or whether it will play the part of leader of the people's revolution" (*Ibid.*, p. 459).

He goes on:

"Marxists are absolutely convinced of the bourgeois character of the Russian revolution. What does that mean? It means that the democratic reforms in the political system, and the social and economic reforms that have become a necessity for Russia, do not in themselves imply the undermining of capitalism, the undermining of bourgeois rule; on the contrary, they will, for the first time, really clear the ground for a wide and rapid, European, not Asiatic, development of capitalism; they will, for the first time, make it possible for the bourgeoisie to rule as a class...

"But it does not by any means follow that a *democratic* revolution (bourgeois in its social and economic essence) would not be of *enormous* interest to the proletariat. It does not follow that the democratic revolution could not take place in a form advantageous mainly to the big capitalist, the financial magnate, and the 'enlightened' landlord, and in a form advantageous to the peasant and the worker...

"Marxism teaches the proletarian not to keep aloof from the bourgeois revolution, not to be indifferent to it, not to allow the leadership of the revolution to be assumed by the bourgeoisie but, on the contrary, to take a most energetic part in it, to fight most resolutely for consistent proletarian democratism, for the revolution to be carried to its conclusion. We cannot get out of the bourgeois democratic boundaries of the Russian revolution, but we can vastly extend these boundaries, and within these boundaries we can and must fight for the interests of the proletariat, for its immediate needs and for conditions that will make it possible to prepare its forces for the future complete victory... He would be a fine Marxist indeed who in a period of democratic revolution failed to see this difference between the degrees of democratism and the difference between its forms, and confined himself to 'clever' remarks to the effect that, after all, this is 'a bourgeois revolution' " (*Ibid.*, pp. 484, 485 & 488).

Here we have Lenin creatively developing the Marxist theory of the distinction as well as link between the democratic and socialist revolutions. The point is further elaborated:

> "We all contrapose bourgeois revolution and socialist revolution; we all insist on the absolute necessity of strictly distinguishing between them; however, can it be denied that in the course of history individual, *particular* elements of the two revolutions become interwoven? Has the period of democratic revolutions in Europe not been familiar with a number of socialist movements and attempts to establish socialism? And will not the future socialist revolution in Europe still have to complete a great deal left undone in the field of democratism?" (*Ibid.*, p. 517).

This concept of the "extension of the boundaries" of the bourgeois democratic revolution and "interweaving" within it of elements of the socialist revolution was a revolutionary departure from the previous formulations of the Marxists, though made with the help of the Marxist method and on the basis of the fundamentals of the Marxist theory. While it has to be sharply demarcated from the notorious Trotskyite "intertwining" of the two stages of the revolution or even the denial of the feasibility of the bourgeois democratic stage itself, it dealt a mortal blow to the Menshevik pedantry about a bourgeois democratic revolution being bourgeois and only bourgeois. As with any really creative development of revolutionary theory, it not only helped the vanguard party to anticipate the course of events. It did this, of course. But even more significant it helped to release the energies of the working class, enabled it to stretch itself to the limits of its historical potential.

What were to be the concrete manifestations of this "extension of the boundaries" of the bourgeois democratic revolution? First and foremost, as has been mentioned above, the endeavour of the working class would be to head this revolution and not act as an auxiliary of the liberal bourgeoisie. We have here the celebrated Leninist concept of the hegemony

of the proletariat in the period of the bourgeois democratic revolution.

The second element is clarity with regard to the allies of the working class in the period of the bourgeois democratic revolution. The question of hegemony cannot be separated from the question of allies. After all, to lead one must have those who will follow. It is in this connection that Lenin makes another remarkable development of Marxist theory which is as illuminating for us today as his concept of hegemony. This is the concept of two trends in bourgeois democracy itself, one of which is the trend of petty bourgeois revolutionary democracy. It is a great pity that while correctly highlighting Lenin's opposition to Menshevik infatuation with the liberal bourgeoisie, not enough stress has been placed on his insistence that there is another trend which is also bourgeois democratic but simultaneously revolutionary. It may be mentioned here that Lenin further developed this concept in his famous report to the Second Congress of the Communist International. In our times the international communist movement has gone still further in this Leninist direction in its analysis of the situation and prospects in many newly independent countries.

Hitting out at the Mensheviks, Lenin states:

> "Our reply to our opponents is—a social democratic party which operates in a bourgeois society cannot take part in politics without marching, in certain cases, *side by side* with bourgeois democracy. The difference between us in this respect is that we march side by side with the revolutionary and republican bourgeoisie, without merging with it, whereas you march side by side with the *liberal and monarchist bourgeoisie*, without merging with it either...
>
> "The tactical slogans we have formulated in the name of the Third Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party coincide with the slogans of the democratic revolutionary and republican bourgeoisie. In Russia this bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie have not yet formed them-

selves into a big people's party. But only one who is utterly ignorant of what is now taking place in Russia can doubt that elements of such a party exist. We intend to guide (if the great Russian revolution makes progress) not only the proletariat, organised by the Social Democratic Party, but also this petty bourgeoisie, which is capable of marching side by side with us...

"Such elements (of revolutionary democracy—M.S.) are mostly to be found among the peasants. In classifying the big social groups according to their political tendencies we can, without danger of serious error, identify revolutionary and republican democracy with the mass of the peasants—of course, in the same sense and with the same reservations and implied conditions that we can identify the working class with social democracy" (*Ibid.*, pp. 482-83).

Further,

"The bourgeoisie, in the mass, will inevitably turn towards counterrevolution, towards the autocracy, against the revolution and against the people, as soon as its narrow, selfish interests are met, as soon as it 'recoils' from consistent democracy (*and it is already recoiling from it!*). There remains the 'people', that is, the proletariat and the peasantry: the proletariat alone can be relied on to march on to the end, for it goes far beyond the democratic revolution... The peasantry includes a great number of semi-proletarian as well as petty bourgeois elements. This makes it also unstable, compelling the proletariat to rally in a strictly class party. However, the instability of the peasantry differs radically from that of the bourgeoisie, for at present the peasantry is interested not so much in the absolute preservation of private property as in the confiscation of the landed estates, one of the principal forms of private property. Without thereby becoming socialist, or ceasing to be petty bourgeois, the peasantry is capable of becoming a wholehearted and most radical adherent of the democratic revolution...

"The Russian revolution will begin to assume its real sweep, and will really assume the widest revolutionary sweep possible in the epoch of bourgeois democratic revolution, only when the bourgeoisie recoils from it and when the masses of the peasantry come out as active revolutionaries side by side with the proletariat. To be consistently carried through to the end, our democratic revolution must rely on forces capable of paralysing the inevitable inconsistency of the bourgeoisie...

"*The proletariat must carry the democratic revolution to completion, allying to itself the mass of the peasantry in order to crush the autocracy's resistance by force and to paralyse the bourgeoisie's instability. The proletariat must accomplish the socialist revolution, allying to itself the mass of the semiproletarian elements of the population, so as to crush the bourgeoisie's resistance by force and paralyse the instability of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie*" (*Ibid.*, pp. 528 & 530).

It is interesting to recall here that Lenin does not anywhere mention that the "main blow" in the stage of the democratic revolution has to be delivered against the inconsistency of the bourgeoisie. From his entire analysis it would follow that the "main blow" has to be delivered against tsarist autocracy, while paralysing the instability of the bourgeoisie. This theory of the "main blow" developed by Stalin in his *Foundations of Leninism* did great harm to the world communist movement, leading to sectarianism in the sphere of united front work.

It is even more interesting to note the possibility outlined by Lenin of the peasantry and petty bourgeoisie developing their own political parties and emerging on the scene as active revolutionaries with their own role to play. Lenin does not formulate in *Two Tactics* that the only two active social forces in the camp of the bourgeois democratic revolution are the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. He certainly insists on the leadership of the proletariat but conceives this leadership in the form of an *alliance* and not of "reserves" (Stalin) nor of total

incapacity of the peasantry and petty bourgeoisie to play any creative, independent role whatsoever (Trotsky). Lenin conceived of the development of the forces of the peasant revolution moving together with and under the leadership of the proletariat, organised in the battle array of insurrection, as the way to the decisive victory of the bourgeois democratic revolution in Russia.

It is this understanding that led Lenin to formulate the most favourable outcome of the Russian bourgeois democratic revolution as "the establishment of the *revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry*" (*Ibid.*, p. 491). The peasantry, as the main social base of the forces of "revolutionary democracy", was to be part of the dictatorship and not just hanging about somewhere on the periphery of power. It is a profound pity that Lenin's visualisation of the role of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie was not always kept in mind by all sections of the international communist movement. It would have helped to avoid a great deal of the sectarianism that harmed the communist movement, not least in the colonial and semicolonial countries.

## III

When the February 1917 revolution broke out Lenin was in exile in Switzerland, returning to Russia only some six weeks later in the famous "sealed train". Although he was on constant contact with the revolutionary underground and although he, above all, had pointed to the possibility and need of turning the imperialist war into civil war, the outbreak of the revolution caught him by surprise. In his famous lecture to the Swiss working youth in January 1917 we find him saying:

> "... the coming years, precisely because of this predatory war, will lead to popular uprisings under the leadership of the proletariat against the power of finance capital, against the big banks, against the capitalists; and these upheavals cannot end otherwise than with the expropriation of the

bourgeoisie, with the victory of socialism.

"We of the older generation may not live to see the decisive battles of this coming revolution" (*Ibid.*, p. 802).

In less than a year after this lecture, Lenin himself announced the victory of the first socialist revolution in the world. Here was the "cunning" of reality, as Lenin so often expressed it, outstripping the mind of genius. But equally, as we shall see, the mind of genius, of a revolutionary genius, catches up with this unexpected twist of history and, by acting upon it, "straightens" it into a leap of the historical spiral. Between February and October 1917 (adhering to the dates of the old Russian calendar) we shall see this tense encounter between the mind of Lenin and the turns of objective reality, and their fusion in the form of the October explosion. A study of this encounter will help to clarify how revolutions are "made", or, at least, how the greatest of revolutionaries led the making of the yet unsurpassed revolution.

Such a study becomes possible only because of Lenin's extraordinary capacity to write out his conclusions even as they are actually becoming a part of the historical process. He wrote in November 1917, just about a month after the seizure of power, as a postscript to *State and Revolution*, itself a major theoretical work completed in the underground, that "it is more pleasant and useful to go through the 'experience of revolution' than to write about it" (*Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 361). But he wrote about the revolution even as he was going through it; this makes the revolution itself articulate, selfconscious and, therefore, instructive.

The very first thing that Lenin attempted was to understand the February revolution. This became necessary for three reasons. Firstly, it had to be understood as to what forces were involved in the surprisingly quick overthrow of the Romanov monarchy. Secondly, the nature of the power system thrown up by the revolution had to be understood, especially the relation between the Provisional Government and the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Thirdly, thought had to

be given to the likely road of advance from the February revolution.

Now, what had happened in the February revolution? The tsar had been overthrown, democratic liberties had been established, and a combination of revolutionary powers had emerged; but where was the democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants?

In his celebrated "Letters from Afar" (March 1917) Lenin analysed the quick collapse of the tsarist monarchy as due to: the churning up accomplished by the 1905 revolution; the "mighty accelerator" called the imperialist war; a joint blow from the "whole of bourgeois and landlord Russia" and from the Soviets of Workers' Deputies; the situation in tsarist Russia of "disorganisation most appalling and the proletariat most revolutionary"; and the "*downright organisation of a plot* against Nicholas Romanov" by Anglo-French imperialism.

The quick success of the February revolution "is only due to the fact that, as a result of an extremely unique historical situation, *absolutely dissimilar currents, absolutely heterogeneous* class interests, *absolutely contrary* political and social strivings have *merged*" (*Ibid.*, p. 5). And the result is the emergence of a new government representative "of the new class that has arisen to political power in Russia, the class of capitalist landlords and the bourgeoisie which has long been *ruling* our country economically" (*Ibid.*, p. 6). But, simultaneously, alongside this government, "has arisen the chief, unofficial, as yet undeveloped and comparatively weak *workers' government*, which expresses the interest of the proletariat and of the entire poor section of the urban and rural population" (*Ibid.*, p. 7).

Lenin amplifies this analysis in the article entitled "The Dual Power" (April 1917):

> "The basic question of every revolution is that of state power... The highly remarkable feature of our revolution is that it has brought about a *dual power*... We must know how to supplement and amend old 'formulas', for example, those of bolshevism, for while they have been found to be

correct on the whole, their concrete realisation *has turned out to be* different. *Nobody* previously thought, or could have thought, of a dual power" (*Ibid.*, p. 18).

He linked the emergence of the dual power and of the surrender of positions to the bourgeoisie entrenched in the Provisional Government to the "*insufficient class consciousness* and organisation of the proletarians and peasants" (*Ibid.*, p. 19).

Thus, the bourgeois democratic revolution, envisaged earlier, had taken on a dramatically new form. Nor was it completed, despite the overthrow of the tsar and the realisation of the democratic liberties on an unprecedented scale. Its incompleteness, above all, lay in the fact that the democratic agrarian revolution had not been accomplished. Lenin's vision that in Russia to complete the bourgeois democratic revolution the triumph of the bourgeoisie was not the cardinal factor, that for this a democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants was required, was confirmed. But, at the same time, revolutionary reality had proved to be more "cunning"—it had set up a dual power!

Where was this dual power going to go? Who would win—the capitalist power of the Provisional Government or the worker peasant power of the Soviets? And if the worker peasant power was to win, would it win on the basis of the bourgeois democratic revolution or would it win by going forward to the socialist revolution, by converting itself from an embryo of the democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants into the dictatorship of the proletariat, based on the alliance of the workers and poorest peasantry led by the former? Was a second revolution on the agenda? And if it was, how was it to be accomplished?

Lenin's analysis was, as usual, both intricate and concrete and issuing forth in a slogan of action.

In his "The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution" (April 1917) he writes:

"State power in Russia has passed into the hands of a new *class*, namely, the bourgeoisie and the landlords who had

become bourgeois. To *this extent* the bourgeois democratic revolution in Russia is completed" (*Ibid.*, p. 23).

But this state power is allying with the feudalists and, above all, not "laying a finger on the landed estates, the material foundation of feudal tsarism". It is not convening the Constituent Assembly, not reforming the state machinery, not taking democratic action against the monopolies, and is bent on continuing the imperialist war. This government has to be overthrown.

But before this can be accomplished the peculiar nature of the dual power ("the main feature of our revolution") has to to be understood:

"The class origin and the class significance of this dual power is the following: the Russian revolution of March 1917 not only swept away the whole tsarist monarchy, not only transferred the entire power to the bourgeoisie, but also *moved closer towards* a revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry...

"The second highly important feature of the Russian revolution is the fact that the Petrograd Soviet of Soldiers' and Workers' Deputies, which, as everything goes to show, enjoys the confidence of the most of the local Soviets, is *voluntarily* transferring state power to the bourgeoisie and *its* Provisional Government, is voluntarily *ceding* supremacy to the latter...

"Two powers *cannot exist* in a state. One of them is bound to pass away; and the entire Russian bourgeoisie is already trying its hardest everywhere and in every way to keep out and weaken the Soviets, to reduce them to naught, and to establish the undivided power of the bourgeoisie.

"The dual power merely expresses a *transitional* phase in the revolution's development, when it has gone further than the ordinary bourgeois democratic revolution, *but has not yet reached* a 'pure' dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" (*Ibid.*, p. 26).

This dual power as well as the willing subordination of the Soviets to the Provisional Government are explained thus:

> "Russia at present is seething. Millions and tens of millions of people, who had been politically dormant for ten years and politically crushed by the terrible oppression of tsarism and by inhuman toil for the landowners and capitalists, *have awakened and taken eagerly* to politics. And who are these millions and tens of millions? For the most part small proprietors, petty bourgeois, people standing midway between the capitalists and the wage workers. Russia is the most petty bourgeois of all European countries.
>
> "A gigantic petty bourgeois wave has swept over everything and overwhelmed the class conscious proletariat, not only by force of numbers but also ideologically; that is, it has infected and imbued very wide circles of workers with the petty bourgeois political outlook" (*Ibid.*, p. 27).

And since "the petty bourgeoisie are in real life dependent upon the bourgeoisie", this petty bourgeois wave has led to the policy of surrender of the Soviets (then dominated by the petty bourgeois parties) to the bourgeois Provisional Government. Hence, the task is to rescue the proletariat and the poorest peasantry, i.e. the nonpettybourgeois sections from the ideological and political influence of the petty bourgeois parties who controlled the Soviets.

Lenin says:

> "Our work must be one of criticism, of *explaining* the mistakes of the petty bourgeois socialist revolutionary and social democratic parties, of preparing and welding the elements of a *consciously* proletarian, Communist Party, and of *curing* the proletariat of the 'general' petty bourgeois intoxication.
>
> "This seems to be 'nothing more' than propaganda work, but in reality it is most *practical revolutionary* work; for there is no advancing a revolution that has come to a standstill, that has choked itself with phrases, and that keeps

'marking time', *not because* of external obstacles, *not because of the violence* of the bourgeoisie (Guchkov is still only threatening to employ violence against the soldier mass), but *because* of the unreasoning trust of the people.

"Only by overcoming this unreasoning trust (and we can and should overcome it only ideologically, by comradely persuasion, by pointing to the *lessons of experience*) can we set ourselves free from the prevailing *orgy of revolutionary phrasemongering* and really stimulate the consciousness both of the proletariat and the mass in general, as well as their bold and determined initiative *in the localities*—the independent realisation, development and consolidation of liberties, democracy, and the principle of people's ownership of all the land" (*Ibid.*, p. 28).

From now on the strategy of the revolution is quite clear in the mind of Lenin. Even in order to complete the bourgeois democratic revolution the state power of the capitalist class has to be destroyed. And, in order to accomplish this the masses, already organised in the embryonic state form of the Soviets, have to be freed from the influence of the petty bourgeois moods and parties. But if this is done then the transition will be made not from capitalist class rule to the democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants, but to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Thus, the compulsions of the completion of the bourgeois democratic revolution in the specific situation, following the victory of the February 1917 revolution, led on to the socialist revolution. Not only had the Russian bourgeoisie displayed its incapacity to complete the democratic revolution but the Russian petty bourgeoisie had also demonstrated its incapacity to shake itself loose from that bourgeoisie. A richly paradoxical situation leading to a highly paradoxical solution—on to the socialist revolution but with the programme of the democratic revolution.

Those who depict Lenin as some kind of dogmatist who somehow managed to bring about a socialist revolution because of fortunate circumstances, and others who depict him as

working out the strategy of the Russian revolution years in advance, both do Russian revolutionary reality as well as Lenin a grave injustice. They mix up the general contours of historic development, including revolutionary leaps, with the actual specific contours of a revolutionary happening. Sketching the general contours is certainly important, but far more important —and a far rarer capacity—is, so to speak, to catch the revolution on the wing, to understand its specific dynamic at the point of explosion. Only those who are able to do both can lead revolutions.

Lenin had worked out the general scheme of the Russian revolution and its separate but interdependent stages—the democratic and socialist—and he had forged the instrument of the revolution, the Bolshevik party, on the basis of this scheme. Additionally, almost he alone had pointed out as long ago as 1914 that the then imperialist war should and could be converted into a civil war. The revolutionary outbreak in Russia dramatically justified him, but in a significantly surprising manner. To surmount that surprise proved beyond the strength of all the other leaders of the Bolsheviks.

Lenin alone was able to swerve his theory to the seemingly escaping perplexity of reality and then transform it into the explicability of the socialist revolutionary solution. Perhaps an even more signal achievement was his capacity to make the Bolsheviks accept his conclusions almost as soon as they were articulated. This again was not only due to his tremendous personality or to the years of invaluable leadership. It was, above all, due to an unfailing capacity to explicate reality almost before it had ensued.

## IV

Lenin, however, did not exhaust himself in simply explaining the revolutionary process and its strategic course. He proved himself to be a most superb tactician of the revolutionary struggle. Here, again, the popular myth that he identified the socialist revolutionary outbreak with the form of the insurrection is very far from the truth.

In his speech at the Seventh (April) Conference of the Bolshevik party he states:

> "In this transitional period, as long as the armed force is in the hands of the soldiers, as long as Milyukov and Guchkov (the most prominent figures in the bourgeois Provisional Government—M.S.) have not yet resorted to violence, this civil war, so far as we are concerned, turns into peaceful, prolonged, and patient class propaganda. To speak of civil war before people have come to realise the need for it is undoubtedly to lapse into Blanquism. We are for civil war but only for civil war waged by a politically conscious class... There are no oppressors in Russia at present; it is the soldiers and not the capitalists who possess the guns and rifles; the capitalists are getting what they want now not by force but by deception, and to shout about violence now it is senseless...
>
> "...what we need in the present situation is caution, caution, caution. To base proletarian tactics on subjective desires means to condemn it to failure" (*Ibid.*, pp. 69-70).

In another speech at the end of June, Lenin says,

> "You have gone through 1905 and 1917. You know that revolution is not made to order, that revolutions in other countries were made by the hard and bloody method of insurrection, and in Russia there is no group, no class, that would resist the power of the Soviets. In Russia, this revoluton can, by way of an exception, be a peaceful one" (*Ibid.*, p. 145).

Nor was this a statement made in passing. Lenin repeats this analysis precisely when the peaceful development of the revolution was no longer possible, i.e. following the political crisis of 3 and 4 July. On 3 July, a demonstration against the Provisional Government began spontaneously in the Vyborg district of Petrograd (now Leningrad). The demonstration in which both soldiers and workers took part threatened to grow into an armed revolt. The Bolsheviks believing that an armed

revolt at that time was premature (i.e. barely four months prior to the October revolution) tried to hold back the masses. On failing to do so they joined the demonstration in order to attempt to give it a peaceful and organised character. Both the Provisional Government and the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets, then controlled by the petty bourgeois parties (the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks), connived at the calling in of the troops and the bloody suppression of the demonstration. Later, even though the Bolsheviks had decided to conclude the demonstration, troops moved in to smash the Bolshevik press, to attempt to arrest Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders. The Bolshevik papers were banned. Mass arrests, searches and raids began. Revolutionary units of the Petrograd garrison were withdrawn from the city and sent to the fronts. This represented an important turning point in the revolutionary process. It was only then that, as Lenin stated, the bayonet was placed on the agenda.

In an article entitled "The Political Situation" (10 July) he writes:

> "The counterrevolution has become organised and consolidated, and has actually taken state power into its hands...
>
> "At present basic state power in Russia is virtually a military dictatorship...
>
> "The slogan 'All Power to the Soviets!' was a slogan for peaceful development of the revolution which was possible in April, May, June and up to 5-9 July, i.e. up to the time when actual power passed into the hands of the military dictatorship. This slogan is no longer correct, for it does not take into account that power has changed hands and that the revolution has in fact been completely betrayed by the S-R's and Mensheviks. Reckless actions, revolts, partial resistance, or hopeless hit and run attempts to oppose reaction will not help. What will help is a clear understanding of the situation, endurance and determination of the workers' vanguard, preparation of forces for the armed uprising, for the victory of which conditions at present are extremely

difficult, but still possible if the facts and trends mentioned above coincide" (*Ibid.*, pp. 167-68).

In the middle of July in an article entitled "On Slogans", Lenin points out that the period of the dual power lasted from February to 4 July, during which

> "What *really mattered* was that arms were in the hands of the people, and there was no coercion of the people from without. That was what opened up and ensured a peaceful path for the progress of the revolution. The slogan 'All Power Must Be Transferred to the Soviets' was a slogan for the next step, the immediately feasible step, on that peaceful path of development. It was a slogan for the peaceful development of the revolution, which was possible and, of course, most desirable between 27 February and 4 July but which is now absolutely impossible.
>
> "Apparently not all the supporters of the slogan 'All Power Must Be Transferred to the Soviets' have given adequate thought to the fact that it was a slogan for peaceful progress of the revolution—peaceful not only in the sense that nobody, no class, no force of any importance, would then (between 27 February and 4 July) have been able to resist and prevent the transfer of power to the Soviets. That is not all. Peaceful development would then have been possible, even in the sense that the struggle of classes and parties *within* the Soviets could have assumed a most peaceful and painless form, provided full state power had passed to the Soviets in good time...
>
> "The substance of the situation is that these new holders of state power can be defeated only by the revolutionary masses, who, to be brought into motion, must not only be led by the proletariat, but must also turn their backs on the Socialist Revolutionary and Menshevik parties, which have betrayed the cause of the revolution...
>
> "It is indisputable that for them (the proletariat—M.S.) to take action and offer resistance at the moment would be aiding counterrevolutionaries. It is also indisputable that a

decisive struggle will be possible only in the event of a new revolutionary upsurge in the very depths of the masses" (*Ibid.*, pp. 174, 177, 179).

Thus, contrary to certain theoreticians who swear by Lenin, there is nothing sacrosanct about armed struggle and insurrection as a form of revolution—the revolution and a particular form of it are not to be identified. It is also quite clear that, at least as far as Lenin was concerned, even when armed uprising became the only possible form of revolution it was neither feasible nor wise to commence on this course in the absence of a revolutionary upsurge of the masses. It was not armed uprising that would lead to the revolutionary upsurge but the revolutionary upsurge that would lead to the insurrection, such was Lenin's conclusion on the very eve of the October revolution.

Another sharp turn of the revolutionary process which placed insurrection on the agenda was the fate of the Kornilov revolt. This was the attempt at an armed suppression of the Soviets, Bolshevik party, mass organisations by the army headquarters headed by General Kornilov. This attempt was connived at by the then head of the civilian government, Kerensky. At the same time contradictions developed between Kerensky and Kornilov on the question of who was to be at the helm following the planned counterrevolutionary massacre. The Kornilov coup was defeated not by the Kerensky government but by the independent mobilisation of the Bolsheviks, by the spontaneous demonstrated will of a large number of military units not to follow the commands of Kornilov and his Military Headquarters.

We find Lenin writing to the Central Committee of the Bolshevik party (30 August):

"The Kornilov revolt is a most unexpected (unexpected at such a moment and in such a form) and downright unbelievably sharp turn in events.

"Like every sharp turn, it calls for a revision and change of tactics. And as with every revision, we must be extra-

cautious not to become unprincipled...

"*Even now* we must not support Kerensky's government...

"We shall fight, we are fighting against Kornilov, *just as* Kerensky's *troops do*, but we do not support Kerensky. *On the contrary*, we expose his weakness. There is the difference. It is rather a subtle difference, but it is highly essential and must not be forgotten.

"What, then, constitutes our change of tactics after the Kornilov revolt?

"We are changing the *form* of our struggle against Kerensky. Without in the least relaxing our hostility towards him, without taking back a single word said against him, without renouncing the task of overthrowing him, we say that we must *take into account* the present situation. We shall not overthrow Kerensky right now. We shall approach the task of fighting him *in a different way*, namely, we shall point out to the people (who are fighting against Kornilov) Kerensky's *weakness* and *vacillation*. That has been done in the past *as well*. Now, however, it has become the *all-important* thing and this constitutes the change.

"The change, further, is that the *all-important* thing now has become the intensification of our campaign for some kind of 'partial demands' to be presented to Kerensky... We must present these demands not only to Kerensky, and not so *much* to Kerensky, as to the workers, soldiers and peasants who have been *carried away* by the course of the struggle against Kornilov...

"It would be wrong to think that we have moved farther away from the task of the proletariat winning power. No. We have come very close to it, not *directly*, but from the side. At *the moment* we must campaign not so much directly against Kerensky, as *indirectly* against him, namely, by demanding a more and more active, truly revolutionary war against Kornilov. The development of this war alone can lead *us* to power" (*Ibid.*, pp. 196-99).

In September Lenin comes to the conclusion that the time for the insurrection has been reached and that the main task of the Bolsheviks is now to take all the necessary organisational measures to ensure the success of the insurrection. From the early days of September we find, as it were, Lenin in a new mood. Earlier he had been urging caution, warning against a premature uprising and insisting upon the work of propaganda and agitation. Now he urges, scolds, remonstrates and demands that an armed uprising be thoroughly prepared and ruthlessly undertaken. Following Marx, Lenin had come to the conclusion that the time had arrived to pass from using the weapon of criticism to taking recourse to the criticism of weapons.

He now writes insistently to the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks (12-14 September):

> "The Bolsheviks, having obtained a majority in the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of both capitals, can and *must* take state power into their own hands.
>
> "They can because the active majority of revolutionary elements in the two chief cities is large enough to carry the people with it, to overcome the opponent's resistance, to smash him, and to gain and retain power...
>
> "The majority of the people are *on our side*. This was proved by the long and painful course of events from 6 May to 31 August and to 12 September. The majority gained in the Soviets of the metropolitan cities *resulted* from the people coming over *to our side*. The wavering of the Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks and the increase in the number of internationalists within their ranks prove the same thing...
>
> "We are concerned now not with the 'day' or 'moment' of insurrection in the narrow sense of the word. That will be only decided by the common voice of those who are *in contact* with the workers and soldiers, with *the masses*...
>
> "The point is to make the *task* clear to the party. The present task must be an *armed uprising* in Petrograd and

Moscow (with its region), the seizing of power and the overthrow of the government" (*Ibid.*, pp. 362-63).

Immediately after he writes again to his Central Committee:

"To be successful, insurrection must rely not upon conspiracy and not upon a party, but upon the advanced class. That is the first point. Insurrection must rely upon a *revolutionary upsurge of the people*. That is the second point. Insurrection must rely upon that *turning point* in the history of the growing revolution when the activity of the advanced ranks of the people is at its height, and when the *vacillations* in the ranks of the enemy and in the *ranks of the weak, halfhearted and irresolute friends of the revolution* are strongest. That is the third point. And these three conditions for raising the question of insurrection distinguish *Marxism from Blanquism*.

"Once these conditions exist, however, to refuse to treat insurrection as an *art* is a betrayal of Marxism and a betrayal of revolution" (*Ibid.*, p. 365).

He calls for concentrating all the forces of the Bolsheviks in the factories and barracks, organising a headquarters of the insurgent detachments, moving the reliable regiments to the most important points, occupying strategic points, arresting the General Staff and the government, taking over the telephone exchange and connecting the headquarters of the insurrection with all the factories, all the regiments, all the points of armed fighting.

On 19 September Lenin is of the view that the crisis has matured. He is of the view that proletarian revolutionary outbreaks are on the agenda in Germany and Italy, that a peasant revolt is developing throughout Russia, that the petty bourgeoisie and the people have turned away from the Kerensky coalition government, that the Bolsheviks and their allies have a majority in the Soviets, in the army and in the country as a whole. He now issues an ultimatum to the Central Committee that he will resign from it unless it discusses his pro-

posals and starts the work of organising the insurrection. He is now of the view that the success of the Russian revolution depends on the two or three days' fighting.

On 10 October 1917, the Central Committee of the Bolshevik party passed the following terse and even classically austere resolution:

> "The Central Committee recognises that the international position of the Russian revolution (the revolt in the German navy which is an extreme manifestation of the growth throughout Europe of the world socialist revolution; the threat of peace by the imperialists with the object of strangling the revolution in Russia) as well as the military situation (the indubitable decision of the Russian bourgeoisie and Kerensky and Co. to surrender Petrograd to the Germans), and the fact that the proletarian party has gained a majority in the Soviets—all this, taken in conjunction with the peasant revolt and the swing of popular confidence towards our party (the elections in Moscow), and, finally, the obvious preparations being made for a second Kornilov revolt (the withdrawal of troops from Petrograd, the dispatch of Cossacks to Petrograd, the encircling of Minsk by Cossacks, etc.)—all this places the armed uprising on the order of the day" (*Ibid.*, p. 436).

But Lenin was far from satisfied with having secured the passage of this resolution. He kept up an incessant barrage at the Central Committee meeting of 16 October, by the vehement denunciation of the public opposition to the armed uprising by Kamenev and Zinoviev (both Central Committee members) as strike breaking deserving expulsion and by continuous appeals for the concrete organisation of the armed uprising.

On 24 October, the "night before", he writes again:

> "With all my might I urge comrades to realise that everything now hangs by a thread; that we are confronted by problems which are not to be solved by conferences or congresses (even congresses of Soviets), but exclusively by

peoples, by the masses, by the struggle of the armed people...

"We must not wait! We may lose everything!...

"All districts, all regiments, all forces must be mobilised at once and must immediately send their delegations to the Revolutionary Military Committee and to the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks with the insistent demand that under no circumstances should power be left in the hands of Kerensky and Co. until the 25th—not under any circumstances; the matter must be decided without fail this very evening, or this very night.

"History will not forgive revolutionaries for procrastinating when they could be victorious today (and they certainly will be victorious today), while they risk losing much tomorrow, in fact, they risk losing everything" (*Ibid.*, pp. 449-50).

On 25 October at 10 AM the appeal went out to the citizens of Russia that the Soviet revolution had triumphed:

"The cause for which the people have fought, namely, the immediate offer of a democratic peace, the abolition of landed proprietorship, workers' control over production, and the establishment of Soviet power—this cause has been secured" (*Ibid.*, p. 451).

The socialist dictatorship of the proletariat had been established on the basis of slogans of the democratic revolution!

LENIN

# How Indian Women Came to Know Him

HAJRAH BEGUM

For Indian women to come to know of Lenin and his teachings during his lifetime was an impossibility.

By the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century eightyfive per cent of Indian women who lived the lives of slaves or serfs under the yoke of zamindars, jagirdars and jotedars in the rural areas were illiterate, ignorant, steeped in superstition and crushed by overpowering poverty and want. Women in the urban areas were not much better, barely 3 per cent of them could read and write; but those belonging to the families of the well to do or upper strata were hemmed in by the four walls of the home due to purdah. The system of the veil prevailed not only among Muslim women but also among Hindus, Sikhs and even Parsis. All the evil customs and traditions of feudal society, child marriage, concubinage, polygamy and polyandry, and the subjugation of the woman in family and society could be found in one or another part of India.

The entire country groaned under British terror, the very

mention of freedom was a crime. Therefore it can well be understood that Indian women—even those who were "advanced" and "educated"—had no knowledge of events in Russia during the first decade of the century.

## I

The first Indian woman who seems to have imbibed some of the ideas so ably and forcefully propounded by Lenin was Madame Bhikaji Rustam Cama.

Madame Cama was a Parsi lady who in 1905 became a close associate of Shyamaji Krishnavarma and joined his group of revolutionaries in England. There is no record available of her meeting with Lenin in London, but the historians of Shyamaji Krishnavarma mention several times that he was in close touch with Russian revolutionary groups which were functioning from London at that time. One can however surmise from the speeches and writings of Madame Cama that she was no stranger to the ideas of socialism. Her name is mentioned as one of those who attended the meeting for inauguration of the India House (the institution with which were connected wellknown revolutionaries such as Virendra Chattopadhyaya). Madame Cama was also one of the founder members of the Indian Home Rule Society and attended all its important meetings and took active part in editing the *Indian Sociologist*.

An example of Madame Cama's revolutionary fervour is her stirring appeal which she issued when Lala Lajpat Rai, prominent Indian freedom fighter, was arrested by the British in May 1907.

> "Men and women of India... resent this atrocity. Make up your minds that the whole population should rather perish than live in such slavery... Let us combine. If we all speak bravely like Lajpat Rai how many forts and prisons must the government build before it can deport or confine us all? ... We are three hundred million strong. It is only unity we require and may Indians lack it not at this critical moment... Friends, show selfrespect and stop the whole

despotic administration by refusing to work for it in any capacity. May Indians unite and rise to the occasion through inspiration of Bande Mataram" (Indulal Yajnik, *Shyamaji Krishnavarma*, pp. 217-18).

In August of that year (1907) was held the Second International Socialist Congress at Stuttgart.

Krupskaya in her memoirs thus quotes Lenin, "the Stuttgart Congress brought into sharp contrast the opportunist and revolutionary wings of international social democratic movement on a number of cardinal issues and decided these issues in the spirit of revolutionary Marxism" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 13, p. 81).

One of the issues on which there was bitter controversy was that of a resolution on India. Madame Cama and Mr Rana were the Indian delegates to this congress and it was Madame Cama who after great efforts persuaded the congress to discuss the following resolution:

"That the continuance of British rule in India is positively disastrous and extremely injurious to the best interests of India, and lovers of freedom all over the world ought to cooperate in freeing from slavery the fifth of the whole human race inhabiting that oppressed country, since, the perfect social state demands that no people should be subject to any despotic or tyrannical form of government" (*Krishnavarma*, p. 229).

It is recorded that though Madame Cama made a very fiery speech and waved what she called the "Indian flag", the resolution was not allowed by the president to be put to vote.

A. Dalsky in his memoirs quotes Virendra Chattopadhyaya as saying the following of this incident:

"An outstanding figure among the immigrants was Rustamji Cama. A descendant of a very rich Bombay family, she donated all her property to help the national liberation of the country. She was inclined to share socialist ideas and joined the French Socialist Party. R. Cama attended the

Congress of the Socialist Parties in Stuttgart in 1907. V. I. Lenin mentions the presence of Indian delegates at the congress in his first report on it without mentioning their names. Rustamji Cama in her turn told us about Lenin and about Russian social democrats, concentrating on the stand they took on the issue of right of selfdetermination of nations" (*Soviet Land*, January 1970).

After the revolution of 1917 Madame Cama kept in touch with Russian revolutionaries and corresponded with Maxim Gorky. She is said to have written to Lenin also who invited her to visit the Soviet Union but Madame Cama could not go. Till the end of her life in 1936 Madame Cama remained a staunch supporter of the parties of the working class.

## II

The world shaking events of October 1917 and the victory of the party led by Lenin had a tremendous influence on people of the neighbouring countries. The revolution was rapidly followed by one decree after another which granted women equal rights and opportunities together with men.

In March 1922 Lenin wrote:

"But as a matter of fact the Bolshevik revolution is the only consistently democratic revolution in respect of such questions as marriage, divorce and the position of children born out of wedlock. And this is a question which most directly affects the interests of more than half the population of any country. Although a large number of bourgeois revolutions preceded it and called themselves democratic, the Bolshevik revolution was the first and only revolution to wage a resolute struggle in this respect both against reaction and feudalism and against the usual hypocrisy of the ruling and propertied classes" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 33, pp. 235-36).

The enemies of the Soviet state thought this stand of Lenin and the Bolsheviks would provide them with weapons to arouse antagonism and animosity of the people of the East. To this end

regular tours and lectures were organised by white Russians, missionaries and mullahs and priests who had fled from the Soviet Union to countries such as Turkey, Afghanistan and India. In these tours terrible stories were related of the antigod "Red Russia" where the Bolsheviks forced women to forsake their religion and their home and made them into public property and put their children into state run homes.

Contrary to the expectations of the propagandists, these stories in most cases helped to create greater interest and curiosity regarding events in Russia in the neighbouring countries. Leaders of national regeneration and social reform took heart from the bold steps taken by the government of workers and peasants and attempted to bring about similar social changes in their own countries. In Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Pasha and in Afghanistan, King Amanullah attempted to hasten the process of radicalisation of society by forbidding women to wear the veil and making it compulsory for girls to attend school.

News of these revolutionary social changes percolated to India also through the movement in support of Khilafat which took Indian Muslims by storm at that time. That section of the Khilafat movement which was attracted to it more because of the national liberation and anti-imperialist aspect attempted to introduce similar reforms amongst Indian Muslims also.

An example of such a change being brought about can be seen in the life of Begum Hasrat Mohani. She was a lady from a well to do zamindar family of Mohan (UP) but under the influence of her husband—Maulana Hasrat Mohani, prominent nationalist and revolutionary—she gave up the veil and came forward to participate in social and political activity. That she was recognised as a leading representative of Muslim women of Oudh is clear from the fact that she was the only Muslim member of the delegation of women which met the British Secretary of State for India in 1917 and presented a memorandum to E. S. Montagu demanding the right of vote for women as well as better educational and health facilities.

Begum Mohani not only took part as a volunteer in the

session of the Indian National Congress presided over by Motilal Nehru but in 1925 she was helping Hasrat Mohani to organise the first Communist Party Conference at Kanpur.

One of the first Indian women to openly join the ranks of socialists was Suhasini Nambiar. She was the sister of Virendra Chattopadhyaya who had such other talented sisters as Sarojini Naidu, Mrinalini Chattopadhyaya. Both the latter had great respect for Lenin and admiration for the Soviet Union. Mrinalini, who was affectionately referred to as "Mummy" by the early communists and revolutionaries and an acknowledged pedagogue, was responsible for fostering the love of socialism in several generations of girl students. Suhasini, who had close associations with "Chatto", as her brother was called during his stay abroad, was however the only sister to join the Communist Party. She was a fervent anti-imperialist and a great champion of the rights of political workers. During the famous Meerut Conspiracy Case trial her outspoken denunciation of the treatment meted out to prisoners used to put the fear of god in the hearts of people like Col Rahman—superintendent of prisons and other jail officials.

## III

But these are only pioneering individuals and it was not till the end of the twenties that masses of women learnt to love and respect Lenin. Naturally enough it was working class women of India who first heard his message.

Lenin in 1913 had described the life of women workers in following words:

> "The scattered families of middle class people, artisans, factory workers, clerks and the lower civil servants, are indescribably poor and barely make ends meet in the *best* of times. Millions and millions of women in such families live (or rather drag out an existence) as household slaves, striving with a desperate daily effort to feed and clothe their families on a few coppers, economising in everything except their own labour" (*On the Emancipation of Women*, p. 26).

And in another context Lenin had stated when speaking of women and juvenile workers:

> "It is indisputable that the capitalist factory places these categories of the working population in particularly hard conditions, and that for them it is particularly necessary to regulate and shorten the working day, to guarantee hygienic conditions of labour, etc" (*Ibid.*, p. 15).

Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya writing of the conditions of working women in preindependence India states:

> "In 1922, in the 5,544 factories out of the total number of workers—about 13 lakhs—more than 2 lakhs were women. By 1929 this figure had risen to 257,161 or 17.07 per cent of all employees. . . Women received lower wages compared to men in all fields of work. . . In Bombay women earned half of what a man earned (man Rs. 1-8-0), woman Re. 0-11-3), in Ahmedabad it was more than a half and in Sholapur less than a half. In the jute industry of Bengal men's wages varied from Rs. 11 to Rs. 40 per month and women's from Rs. 11 to Rs. 15 per month. . . in the mines of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa men's earnings for unskilled labour varied from 4-8 annas and women earned 2 annas to 6 annas a day" (*Our Cause*, p. 155).

Ushatai Dange recalling those days says:

> "Minimum hours of work were 10. There were no creches, no provision of maternity benefit and women left their babies drugged with opium in the care of old women or young boys in the chawls. Apart from other hardships jointly suffered by men and women, the 'naikin' or jobber was a terror for women workers. She charged Rs. 5 from each woman for getting her a place in the mill and on every pay day each worker had to drop Re 1 in the lap of the naikin as her share of bribe. But this was not all, women who were vigorous and strong had to do the house work of the naikin and the attractive and young ones were sent by the naikin to the house of

manager or jobber or sahib. Woe betide the working woman who refused the advances of the 'sahibs', it was a question of either agree or loose your job."

In 1922 the All India Trade Union Congress came into being and in 1928 the Girni Kamgar Union of Bombay was organised.

So far women industrial workers, though restless and seething with discontent, had kept aloof from the trade unions. They had been approached by women workers who had gone to them under the direction of such organisations as the Servants of India Society or other philanthropic organisations but these "slum workers" had not created any effect.

It was the slogans of the militant trade unionists, S. A. Dange, K. N. Joglekar, N. M. Joshi and others, for an eight hour day, proper wages, human treatment and maternity benefit which shattered the barriers erected through centuries between men and women and swept women textile workers into the vortex of the giant strike of 1928.

Ushatai recalls how when Dange was arrested hundreds of thousands of workers flocked to their house to express their solidarity, how the mass of workers turned into a mammoth meeting and how the workers seeing her on the balcony called out: "Come down, Tai. Come and speak to us."

This was the first instance of a woman addressing a protest meeting of workers.

Once the breach had been made women tried to outdo men in their militancy. Bombay trade unionists relate how women textile workers crowded into the tiny union offices, thronged the meetings addressed by S. A. Dange, S. S. Mirajker, R. S. Nimbkar and others, insisted on paying their four anna membership dues to the union, formed the front lines of strike pickets, roundly abused the blacklegs and antistrike men and women and faced the police lathi charges, which in the days of the British were truly brutal, were beaten up, manhandled, molested and thrown into jail.

It was at the mass meetings that the working class women first heard the name of Lenin, it was in the union office where they went to get their one cupful of rice as strike relief that they saw his picture. During the strikes hundreds and thousands of leaflets were distributed and almost every leaflet referred to the great Russian revolution successfully led by Lenin and spoke of the Soviet land where working men and women were masters. The women could not read these leaflets, neither could the men, but the leaflets were treasured and safely taken home to be listened to in the evenings and pondered over. Thus it was that the working class women of Bombay came to know and love Lenin as a man who thought of the toilers, the oppressed and the worst exploited and who called upon them to rise and fight for their rights.

Ushatai Dange was soon the unchallenged leader of the 60,000 women textile workers of Bombay and a vicepresident of the Girni Kamgar Union. Other women came to the fore. The most militant of these were organised into groups or study circles addressed by S. V. Deshpande, veteran trade unionist and communist, and here they learnt of what Lenin said about the family, about religion, about national liberation and about the struggle of the working class.

What happened in Bombay also happened in other industrial centres. In Bengal it was the women jute workers under the leadership of the Chatkal Mazdoor Sangh, in Sholapur the All-Women Union of Bidi Workers, in Kanpur the textile and tannery workers led by the Mazdoor Sabha, in Delhi, Assam and other centres, women workers through their militant trade unions came to know the name of Lenin.

Kamala Mukerji, veteran revolutionary of Bengal, writes:

> "I was greatly impressed by an event at the time of the carters' strike when the thelewalas and carters arranged their bullock carts from Sealdah to Howrah stations against some order of the Calcutta police, thus obstructing the entire road on 1 April 1930. The police fired some rounds to break the strike as a result of which several carters died.

There was a tremendous stir in Calcutta. My father was a revolutionary and escaped to Germany in 1913 where he joined M. N. Roy. At that time I used to read all progressive literature. Thus I came to know that a great revolution took place in Russia under the leadership of Lenin."

Meenakshi Sane, another pioneer in the working class movement, writes:

"In my youth I was deeply impressed by the courageous strike of more than a thousand women bidi workers in Sholapur. Discussions with my brother who was a communist influenced me to begin with, then I read *What Is To Be Done?, State and Revolution* and Krupskaya's *Memoirs of Lenin*. The impression on my mind was that Lenin was a profound scholar, one who fought for the emancipation of women and for the rights of the oppressed people... I think that though in the main Lenin wrote about economic emancipation of the masses, their cultural freedom was all along present in his mind. Lenin wanted to create a new man, a new society of peoples on the earth."

Ushatai Dange, Kamala Mukerjee, Meenakshi Sane—all were among the first few women to join the Communist Party and to devote the rest of their lives to the cause of the working class.

## IV

Lenin took a keen interest in the question of rights for women. In 1903 when the party programme (of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party) was adopted Lenin insisted on the addition of the clause "complete equality of rights for men and women". This was further amplified as "full equality of all citizens irrespective of sex, religion and race".

Not only was the equality of women made a part of the party programme but after the assumption of power by the party one of the very first decrees of the young Soviet state was that granting women full equality with men (June 1918).

This was the first instance in world history that the inequality of women was fully and finally abolished by legislation. Women acquired the right not only to vote and be elected but also the right to work, to equal pay, to education, etc. Soviet laws gave women equal rights in society and in the family.

The enemies of socialism did their best to make capital of the fact that divorce had been permitted and the ban on abortions and the stigma on children born out of wedlock been removed by spreading the canard that in the Soviet Union there was no morality, that the sanctity of marriage was being violated, and that women had become public property, that children were denied the right to have a father, etc.

These malicious lies could not stand closer scrutiny. Those who studied Lenin's writings and inquired into his own life found that not even his worst adverseries could point a finger to a single "immoral" action on his part, and that his writings were full of scathing attacks on the hypocritic "morality" of the bourgeois society.

Speaking of marriage Lenin said:

> "The decay, putrescence, and filth of bourgeois marriage with its difficult dissolution, its licence for the husband and bondage for the wife, and its disgustingly false sex morality and relations fill the best and most spiritually active of people with the utmost loathing... I may be a morose ascetic, but quite often this socalled 'new sex life' of young people—and frequently of the adults too—seems to be purely bourgeois and simply an extension of the good old bourgeois brothel... I consider the famous 'glass of water' theory as completely un-Marxist and, moreover, as anti-social... To be sure, thirst has to be quenched. But would a normal person normally lie down in the gutter and drink from a puddle? Or even from a glass whose edge has been greased by many lips? But the social aspect is more important than anything else. The drinking of water is really an individual matter. But it takes two people to make love,

and a third person, a new life, is likely to come into being. This deed has a social complexion and constitutes a duty to the community. As a communist I have no liking at all for the 'glass of water' theory, despite its attractive label: 'emancipation of love'" (*On the Emancipation of Women*, pp. 100-2).

In a similar fashion Lenin hit out at the attitude of capitalist reformers regarding such social evils as prostitution:

"No moral indignation (hypocritical in nine cases out of ten) about prostitution can do anything to prevent this commerce in women's bodies; as long as wage slavery exists, prostitution must inevitably continue. Throughout history of society all oppressed and exploited classes have been compelled (their exploitation consists in this) to hand over to the oppressors, first their unpaid labour, and secondly, their women to be concubines of the 'masters'."

Smt Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya, for years the secretary and then the president of the All India Women's Conference, thus acknowledges the correctness of Lenin's analysis:

"Statistics prove that 90 per cent of the prostitutes seek the profession from economic pressure and 4/5 are drawn from classes in extreme poverty. The only country which has so far successfully tackled this problem is Russia for there alone the very root of this evil is sought to be eradicated not only through legislation, but by providing work, homes and more human conditions for these sad victims" (*Our Cause*, p. 392).

Smt Kamala Devi's political life began as a congress volunteer. As a child her sympathies for the oppressed people and specially for women had been aroused by the writings of the pioneer social reformer—Pandita Rama Bai. When she went to England to take her degree in sociology she spent months doing "social work" in the East End slums of London. On her return to India Kamala Devi was profoundly attracted by Mahatma Gandhi's call to women to come forth and take part in the independence movement. She had, while in Europe, spent a few months with

Virendra Chattopadhyaya in Berlin and was familiar with socialist literature but it was not till she spent some time in jail and studied Marxist literature that she realised the full import of the happenings of 1917. Expressing herself in an article on the future of Indian women Kamala Devi writes:

> "Lenin says, 'It is our task to make politics accessible to every working woman . . . from the moment private property and private ownership of land and factories is abolished and the power of the landowners and capitalists broken, political duties will become perfectly simple to the working masses and within the reach of all. . .' To illustrate the truth of this let us take Russia where the future of womanhood the world over is so vividly foreshadowed.
>
> " 'Every cook must learn to rule the state', said Lenin and his country is endeavouring to realise it. 'Proletarian women have stood the test magnificently in the revolution. Without them we should not have won', said Lenin. Today they are reaping the fruits of their revolutionary fervour and their sacrifices in the cause of the exploited and the oppressed. They enjoy not the economic freedom of the bourgeois state but economic security which is the right of every citizen—not merely the right to work, but the right to their legitimate earnings. They enjoy real political power" (*Ibid.*, p. 395).

Speaking of Lenin's personality Kamala Devi says:

> "To me he seemed essentially a human person and very close to us. What impressed me most in his writings was the fact that Lenin laid such stress on education and still more education. His insistence was on bringing modern scientific knowledge to the people—to all the people, men and women—and he was keen that the cultural level of the masses should be raised."

Not only Kamala Devi but a large number of women, who had responded to Gandhi's slogans of swadeshi and boycott of foreign goods, had come forth in the twenties and thirties for

picketing of liquor shops or for participating in salt satyagraha, found themselves at the crossroads in the thirties. A number of them were disappointed at what seemed to them the untimely calling off of the mass movement, others felt frustrated because the Indian National Congress did not appear to take a definite stand on socialism. Their terms of imprisonment brought them for the first time in close proximity with the masses of women and made them feel that there was something lacking in the national political movement.

Aruna Asaf Ali, wellknown political figure and leader of the 1942 movement, relates in an interview:

> "I was very young, barely 20, when I married Asaf Ali and was thrown into the vortex of the national movement. My father was a liberal and had nationalist inclinations. As a girl I had seen a cartoon of Lenin but when I showed it to my father he said 'Lenin is not like that, Lenin is a great revolutionary'.
>
> "In 1930 when I was first imprisoned I got the opportunity to read *Ten Days That Shook the World*. I was fascinated by this book. In 1932 I was again imprisoned and put in solitary confinement for having gone on hungerstrike. I thought a great deal of the future which at that time seemed bleak. To us, congress radicals, it appeared that the rightwing wanted to compromise with the British. On coming out of jail I discussed these ideas with Yusuf Meher Ali and other 'socialists'. They wanted the Congress to give a clear call for socialism, all of them had a deep respect for Lenin and thought of him as a true socialist.
>
> "In 1942 when the break came and I defied Gandhiji's directions, went underground and tried to organise resistance to the British, I realised very clearly that to bring about a revolution a revolutionary party is the prime necessity. That is why I looked upon the *History of the CPSU* as a textbook. To me the most remarkable aspect of Lenin was his successful efforts at building the party, a party of the working class, a party trained to organise a revolution, a party disciplined

and steeled. In this I saw the difference between Lenin and Jawaharlal Nehru. Lenin's doggedness of purpose made a profound impression on me. No matter whether he was in Switzerland, Germany or England, his whole thought and mind was for the revolution and he lived for that.

"Later when I went to the Soviet Union I realised how Lenin's leadership had really led to a new society coming into being in that country. I had been told that the communists were rigid and mechanical, strict and firm, but I found the Soviet people extremely human and sympathetic. They could find time to listen to other people's problems and difficulties and patiently place their own point of view."

Smt Rameshwari Nehru, indefatigable worker for the rights of women and staunch Gandhite, was another notable person to acknowledge the success of the Soviet Union in bringing about equality in the position of men and women. Speaking on the women's movement in India in 1929 she said:

"Women are not satisfied with being merely the subject of men's actions. They claim to have a hand in the administration of their affairs. The evergrowing number of women serving on the legislative and executive bodies of most of the western countries is a monument to the success they have achieved and it is noteworthy that their number is greatest in the countries which are inclined towards socialism or towards the recognition of the rights of individuals as opposed to the rights or privileges of classes. In Russia women are serving on all administrative bodies" (*Gandhi Is My Star*).

## V

Lenin had said about the housewife and her work:

"Notwithstanding all the laws emancipating women, she continues to be a *domestic slave*, because *petty housework* crushes, strangles, stultifies and degrades her, chains her to

the kitchen and the nursery, and she wastes her labour on barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve racking, stultifying and crushing drudgery. The real *emancipation of women*, real communism, will begin only where and when an all-out struggle begins (led by the proletariat wielding the state power) against this petty housekeeping, or rather when its *wholesale transformation* into a largescale socialist economy begins" (*On the Emancipation of Women*, p. 61).

In a talk with Clara Zetkin, Lenin again emphasised the need of freeing the housewife from drudgery and said:

"We are organising community kitchens and public dining rooms, laundries and repair shops, creches and kindergartens, children's homes and educational institutions of every kind. In brief, we are quite in earnest about carrying out the requirements of our programme to shift the functions of housekeeping and education from the individual household to society" (*Ibid.*, p. 111).

Lenin's concern for the housewife endeared him to women of all classes and sections in the colonies and semicolonies—for all had to undergo this drudgery in some form or the other—when they came to know of it.

Shyam Kumari Nehru, able advocate and prominent social worker, writes thus:

"For the first time in history of the modern world, womanhood has been emancipated; the credit for giving complete equality to both sexes must go to the Soviet Russia. In Russia the welfare of woman receives primary consideration, and woman has at last acquired the same rights and privileges as man. She is accorded an equal opportunity in every social activity even after marriage, she is free to choose for herself and the Code clearly asserts that marriage 'does not establish community of property between the married persons'. Protection has been given to the woman during the period of pregnancy; she enjoys special privileges after childbirth, while she is at work her child is tended in creches.

Community kitchens have solved the problem of her domestic duties. In short, the welfare of woman in every walk of life is the first consideration. This new freedom enables her to take an everincreasing interest in life. Today she is serving in almost every department" (*Our Cause*, p. xiv).

## VI

Lenin laid great emphasis on the organisation of women and on bringing them into the political field. In this connection he said:

"In order to be active in politics under the old, capitalist regime special training was required, so that women played an insignificant part in politics, even in the most advanced and free capitalist countries. Our task is to make politics available to every working woman. . . In capitalist society the woman's position is marked by such inequality that her participation in politics is only an insignificant fraction of man's participation. The power of working people is necessary for a change to be wrought in this direction" (*On the Emancipation of Women*, p. 68).

In an interview with Clara Zetkin, the German revolutionary, Lenin said:

"Mobilisation of the female masses, carried out with a clear understanding of principles and on a firm organisational basis, is a vital question for the communist parties and their victories. But let us not deceive ourselves. Our national sections still lack the proper understanding of this question. They adopt a passive, wait and see attitude when it comes to creating a mass movement of working women under communist leadership. They do not realise that developing and leading such a mass movement is an important part of all party activity, as much as half of all party work. Their occasional recognition of the need and value of a purposeful, strong and numerous communist women's movement is

but platonic lip service rather than a steady concern and task of the party.

"They regard agitation and propaganda among women and the task of rousing and revolutionising them as of secondary importance, as the job of just women communists. None but the latter are rebuked because the matter does not move ahead more quickly and strongly. This is wrong, fundamentally wrong! ...In the final analysis, it is an underestimation of women and of their accomplishments" (*Ibid.*, pp. 109-10).

The correctness of Lenin's formulations was realised by Indian women through their own experience.

With the outbreak of second world war, the political changes taking place in India found their reflection in the women's movement also. Prices shot up, consumer goods became scarce and under the garb of war efforts the loot of the peasantry and working people became intensified. On the one hand the seething discontent of the people against imperialism reached bursting point and on the other the British masters seemed determined to add insult to injury and the arrogant attitude and contemptuous behaviour of the British and American soldiers towards Indians exceeded all bounds.

With the attack of Hitler on the Soviet Union the great controversy of India's attitude to the war become the topic of the day. Very soon newspapers and radio bulletins began to be full of information about the gigantic battles being fought between German and Japanese fascists on the one hand and communist Russia aided by all freedom loving people on the other. The names of Soviet generals came to be known in practically every household; filled with admiration for the heroism and courage of Soviet women, Indian women began naming their daughters "Zoya" and "Tanya".

## VII

The Andhra Mahila Sangham had been formed in the late thirties. Under the able leadership of Dr Atchamamba (daughter of the prominent social reformer of South India) who had joined the Communist Party, this organisation took up simple needs of women such as better sanitary provision, proper training of midwives, for starting of literacy classes and social reforms such as the ban on child marriage and provision of divorce for Hindus. During the war years this organisation spread out to practically all the districts of Andhra proper (excluding the districts then under the Nizam) and at the height of its popularity it had about 50,000 members organised under village, taluka and district committees. The entire organisation was guided by Lenin's ideas of the place of women in society and its active workers, Suryavati, Savitriamma, Rajeswaramma, Subamma and Premila Tai were all Communist Party members.

From the platform of the Andhra Mahila Sangham cultural performances used to be organised where through burra katha and other folk forms not only were the evils of calling in the old type of midwife exposed but antifascist propaganda, songs about the position of Soviet women, conditions in the Soviet —the land of Lenin—were sung before vast audiences of ten to fifteen thousand men and women.

The more advanced women cadres were organised in groups, fractions and committees and their classes on Marxism, Lenin's precepts of the family and women's place in society were conducted by leading Marxists.

In the area under the Nizam the mass movement developed in the name of Telengana. With the partition of India and the declaration by the British that the Indian states were free to choose their future the peasant guerilla bands which had been formed for distribution of land to the landless spearheaded their actions against the Nizam's army and the Razakars, a paramilitary organisation of Kasim Rizvi. The slogan of these bands was land reforms and the merger of the state with the

rest of the country. Armed with primitive weapons and face to face with an enemy which had modern ones, the Telengana guerillas nevertheless put up a magnificent struggle. By the end of 1948, they virtually ruled in nine districts of Telengana. In this struggle women of Telengana played a heroic part; they not only sheltered the underground guerillas, acted as their messengers, nursed the wounded but many of the more daring participated in armed clashes also and put to shame the paid mercenaries of the Nizam.

In the areas under the influence of the guerillas, literacy classes and political classes of men and women cadre were held. In these classes peasant women of Telengana for the first time came to know Lenin's name and what he stood for. Smt Kamala Devi, Swarajamma, and several other communist women were the leaders of these struggles.

## VIII

In the Punjab it was the Selfdefence League which came forward in 1941 to the aid of Lahore city women greatly harassed by the scarcity of food, kerosene oil, matches and other consumer goods. Some of the young girls who had earlier organised the Girl Students' Union of Punjab took up the task of collecting signatures for the opening of ration shops in the mohallas and of organising the huge restless queues of women which formed as soon as the shops opened. From this simple beginning developed one of the most militant and best organised women's organisations which by 1945 had more than fifteen thousand members throughout the province.

Under this league, not only was food distribution supervised but work centres were opened for the poorest sections of city women who could not cope with the rising spiral of prices. These work centres in turn became the schools where women were not only taught reading and writing but where political education about their equal rights, the need for legal reform, the history of the national movement and the fundamentals

of socialism were taught to women. Thus it was through the efforts of Perin Bharucha, Litto Rai, Puran Mehta, Lajvanti and some thirty other young communist women that the name of Lenin and his ideas of socialism were propagated among the kisan women and the city mohalla women—Hindu, Muslim and Sikh—of the Punjab. The Punjab communist women did not forget Lenin's insistence of organising the working women. The Women's Defence League took up not only such questions of the peasants as the fight for lower rates for using canal water, but also supported the strikes of industrial workers in the cities such as the strike of the Bata factory workers. In 1944 the league intervened in the strike of the Fateh Chand teachers and this followed by the formation of the Punjab Women Teachers' Union which had as its base the municipal teachers.

Prominent women like Smt Rameshwari Nehru, Begum Iftikharuddin, Baji Rashida Latif were drawn to the support of this movement.

In Punjab also one of the forms of rousing, mobilising and educating the peasant and lower middle class women was that of cultural squads. Sheila Bhatia's songs, first used to pacify the queues at the ration shops, become popular throughout the province. Thousands of men and women used to sit the whole night watching the simple folk dances and listening to the folk tunes now utilised by Sheila Bhatia, Snehlata and Shanta Kiernan to tell Indian women about the conditions of Soviet women who under the leadership of Lenin had successfully won their equal rights and were now fighting against fascism and for the defence of their motherland. The names of Zoya and Tanya were known in the villages as well as the cities.

## IX

In the early forties the "terrorist" women were released from Bengal jails. These were women who as young students had joined the Anushilan, Hindustan Republican Army or

other "terrorist" parties and had taken part in such daring actions as the Chittagong Armoury Raid or other militant actions against the British. They had been arrested and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment and towards the end of the thirties had been put together in one central prison. Here they read such literature concerning the Russian revolution and Lenin's writings as could be smuggled to them. As a result of their study they began to realise that individual terrorist actions and killing of a handful of British officers were not the way to get rid of British imperialism. Their mind turned towards communism and when, as a result of the mass agitation spearheaded by the Communist Party and aided by Gandhiji, they were released, the majority came to the Communist Party and became some of its most honoured and respected members. Amongst them were Kamala Chatterji, Kalpana Dutt, Suhashini Ganguli and others.

Another group which played an effective part in the organisation of women was that of girls, who had gone abroad for study and in Europe, joined Marxist circles or became members of communist groups. The best known amongst these were Renu Roy, Shanta Gandhi, Vimla Kanungo and Parvati Kumaramangalam. Renu—later known as Renu Chakravartty—was the first one to put forward the idea of an organisation of girl students and, after presiding over the first girl students' conference held at Lucknow in 1939, she helped to set up a Girl Students' Union which had functioning units in several girls' colleges in Calcutta and the mofussil towns. By the beginning of the forties the majority of students—girls as well as boys—were up in arms against the atrocities committed by the British soldiers and police during the 1942 "Quit India" movement. A section went over to the Forward Bloc influenced by Subhas Bose but a major section turned towards communism.

In 1943, under the impact of the advance of Japanese armies, the Mahila Atma Raksha Samiti came into being. Almost immediately the organisation had to face the problems created by the Bengal famine with its devastation of rural areas, and the destitution of hundreds of thousands of peasant

families. The members of the Atma Raksha Samiti had to grapple with such varied tasks as the opening of cheap food shops, the running of free gruel centres, the aid and succour of the women and children dying of hunger, and providing of shelter to the orphans and young destitute girls. The famine was on such a colossal scale that almost every social organisation in Bengal and several philanthropic societies such as the Marwari Relief Society, the All India Women's Conference, etc. were engaged in famine relief work but it was only the Atma Raksha Samiti which carried out the work not as an act of charity but as a means of putting heart and fighting spirit into the victims of the disaster.

From the relief kitchens were enrolled members and volunteers with whose aid centres for cottage industries were started. The meetings of the Mahila Samiti became platforms for spreading the message of anti-imperialism, socialism and equal rights of women and the centres for selfhelp became study circles for Marxism. By the end of 1945 this organisation had its branches in both eastern and western Bengal and had more than 30,000 Hindu and Muslim women as members organised under district, area and village committees.

The directives of Lenin to organise the working women were not forgotten. In this very period communist women organised mass demonstrations in support of the demands of women workers in jute, textile and rice mills of Bengal which employed fairly large number of women. The struggles of several thousands of women bidi mazdoors were also taken up. Similarly the thousands of women belonging to the families employed in the tea plantations of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling came into the movement.

Manikuntala Sen, Renu Chakravartty, Kanak Mukherji, Geeta Mukherji and a large number of other communist women were the leaders of these organisations.

In 1946 the whole of Bengal was stirred by the peasant movement called tebhaga. In this movement thousands upon thousands of kisan women took part side by side with their men. Militant women helped to harvest the paddy and guard

it from the raids of the agents of jotedars; undaunted and unarmed, they became volunteers and tenaciously fought against the jotedars and even the armed police who later came to their aid.

As in Telengana the cultural squads of the tebhaga movement took the message of the part played by the peasants and workers in the revolution of 1917 to the masses of Indian peasant men and women and the name of Lenin and his ideas became known to them.

The same story was repeated to a greater or lesser extent in other parts of India. In Delhi the Mahila Sangh formed under the leadership of Sarla Gupta, Shakuntala Devi, Vimla Mohan and others enrolled 5,000 members who participated in Bengal famine relief, took part in anti-British demonstrations and protests and actively supported the strikes of textile and tramway workers of Delhi.

Through the Indian People's Theatre movement in which Mahila Sangh workers took active part thousands of people in Delhi were able to see shows depicting the oppression of imperialism and showing the way out through socialism. One of the most popular items of the IPTA witnessed by thousands of persons was the shadow play on Zoya.

In Uttar Pradesh it was the Mahila Samitis of Kanpur, Banaras and Ballia; in Bombay it was the Parel Mahila Sangh which introduced masses of women to the name of Lenin and his ideas.

This great success in organising women under the leadership of the party was possible because it was in the forties that the Communist Party had paid heed to the directives of Lenin and seriously taken in hand the political education of women. A women's fraction was set up with a Central Committee member in charge, almost all provincial committees had their women committees or fractions; party schools for women were organised at the centre as well as in different provinces, party letters and circulars were issued on training, educating and organising women. A large team

of women wholetime functionaries was appointed by the provincial committees of Andhra, Punjab, Bengal and Bombay.

Thus it was that under the guidance of the Communist Party of India, Indian women were organised and mobilised along the lines set forth by Lenin. Thus they prepared themselves to fight not only for their rights but to take part in the tremendous task of the struggle against imperialism and its supporters, feudalism and right reaction, and for the establishment of a national democratic government in the country which would pave the way for a socialist regime.

# LENIN

# Against Revisionism, Dogmatism and Sectarianism

H. K. VYAS

It would be no exaggeration to say that Leninism grew in furious struggles against prevalent trends which were a deviation and a departure from Marxism, trends which proved to be alien to Marxism.

These trends have been classified and summarised as revisionism, dogmatism and sectarianism.

Almost from the very inception, during the last years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, when Lenin tried to set about to form a truly revolutionary party of the proletariat, he had to contend with some of these trends.

At that time tsarism had allowed a certain "freedom" for propagation of Marxian views hoping to utilise for combating Narodism and its terrorism. This led to a situation when a theory of "legal Marxism" came to be propounded by men like Struve, who advocated the need to subordinate the further development of Marxist thought to the needs of tsarist censor. The very first salvoes fired by Lenin were against this trend of

"legal Marxism". Side by side with this he had to contend with the internationally most prevalent trend known as Bernsteinism. This trend propagated the position of opportunist compromises with the bourgeoisie and of sharing power with them in the name of "initiating reforms". Lenin stated that the crucial proposition of this was:

> " 'The movement is everything, the ultimate aim is nothing'—this catch phrase of Bernstein's expresses the substance of revisionism better than many long disquisitions" (*Selected Works*, 3-volume edition, 1967, Vol. 1, p. 51).

Lenin castigated this trend in the following words:

> "And it patently follows from the very nature of this policy that it may assume an infinite variety of forms, and that every more or less 'new' question, every more or less unexpected and unforeseen turn of events, even though it change the basic line of development only to an insignificant degree and only for the briefest period, will always inevitably give rise to one variety of revisionism or another" (*Ibid.*, pp. 51-52).

Lenin had also to contend with and overcome the trend of Menshevism which along with opportunism in the political field on lines of Bernstein also advocated and laid stress exclusively on the "economic struggle" of the working class. Writing about this trend Lenin said:

> "The infatuation with the strike movement and economic struggles gave rise to a peculiar form of social democratic opportunism, known as 'economism' " (*Collected Works*, Vol. 13, p. 10).

According to Lenin the root of all these deviations and trends was one and the same namely the influence of bourgeois ideology on the working class. Tracing its immediate cause Lenin said:

"In all capitalist countries, the proletariat is inevitably connected by a thousand transitional links with its neighbour on the right, the petty bourgeoisie. In all workers' parties there inevitably emerges a more or less clearly delineated rightwing which, in its views, tactics and organisational 'line', reflects the opportunist tendencies of the petty bourgeoisie" (*Ibid*, p. 113).

That is why Lenin clubbed all the abovenoted trends in one word, namely revisionism and stated that in their essential core all these trends are interconnected. He wrote:

"In casting a retrospective glance at the struggle of the two trends in Russian Marxism and social democracy during the last twelve years (1895-1907), one cannot avoid the conclusion that 'legal Marxism', 'economism' and 'Menshevism' are diverse forms of one and the same historical tendency. The 'legal Marxism' of Mr Struve (1894) and those like him was a *reflection of Marxism in bourgeois literature*. 'Economism', as a distinct trend in social democratic activities in 1897 and subsequent years, virtually implemented the programme set forth in the *bourgeois liberal 'credo'*: economic struggle for the workers, political struggles for the liberals. Menshevism is not only a literary trend, not only a tendency in social democratic activity, but a close knit faction, which during the first period of the Russian Revolution (1905-7) pursued its own distinct policy—a policy which *in practice subordinated the proletariat to bourgeois liberalism*" (*Ibid.*, p. 112).

It is not necessary to deal at length with the struggle Lenin had to wage against "legal Marxism" of Mr Struve. In conditions of tsarist autocracy which was then the bastion of reaction, where even ordinary civil liberties and right of organisation were nonexistent, the illusoriness of "legal Marxism" was quickly exposed.

The main fight Lenin had to wage was against "economism". Economism is a system of philosophical thought which says that the working class is interested in and can clearly

and easily grasp the significance of socialism only through the struggles for its day to day economic demands. Through these struggles the working class is steeled and learns the lessons of the revolution. It is not necessary nor desirable to import into these struggles the "abstract"(?) question of political struggle.

In his pamphlet *What Is To Be Done?* Lenin opened a broadside on these erroneous views. Lenin propounded the revolutionary theses that the working class as the vanguard is not only interested in what concerns it directly and immediately in terms of its living conditions, it is and should be interested in taking the lead in combating any and every manifestation of suppression and oppression by tsarist autocracy or by the bourgeoisie. Only by coming into open struggle against autocracy can the working class forge links and alliances with other classes for a successful onslaught against capital. In *What Is To Be Done?* Lenin debunked the theory of spontaneity. He laid down the proposition that Marxism, a clearcut class consciousness, is a world outlook. It can only be imparted to the working class by a process of conscious propaganda and agitation. To think that day to day economic struggles will by themselves, spontaneously, lead to the growth of a socialist consciousness is an illusion. Even the working class is affected by tradition, propaganda, education in every way with "bourgeois ideas". By day to day economic struggle alone those ideas cannot be combated or eliminated. What is needed is a conscious effort to impart socialist consciousness to the working class and this can only be done by organising a separate party of revolutionaries. *What Is To Be Done?* laid the basis of the organisation in an all-Russia party of the proletariat.

Lenin had not only to propagate and fight for the general proposition of the need for such a party. He had to combat erroneous notions about the organisational principles necessary for such a party. Mensheviks like Martov and others proposed that any person, be he a worker or a university professor, who proclaims his adherence to the principles of such a party should be treated as a member. Lenin fiercely combated this

idea. His view was that the party of the proletariat has to be a special type of party which should not stipulate for its members only the acceptance of the principles in general. It is necessary that there should be a common will for action. Lenin therefore insisted that to be eligible to be a member of such a party it is necessary that the person should work under and inside one of the primary organisations of the party. Without such practical "apprenticeship" membership of the party should not be allowed. But for this principled and disciplined proposition of Lenin it would have been inconceivable that well knit fighting communist parties could emerge.

A crucial struggle against revisionism took place on the question of tactics to be followed by the proletariat in the stage of bourgeois democratic revolution. Russia of those days was an unbridled autocracy. The main and immediate task was to overthrow tsarism and usher in even some kind of a republic. Without such a change, without passing through such an intermediary stage further advance on the road to socialism was unthinkable. Proceeding from this proposition the Mensheviks put across the utterly revisionist proposition that during this stage of the revolution all that the proletariat has to do is to let the bourgeois liberals take the leadership and wait for its chance in the next stage of the revolution. Lenin in his famous pamphlet *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Bourgeois Democratic Revolution* laid bare the bankruptcy of this proposition.

Writing about it Lenin says:

> "These differences were fully formulated... and established the *basic* divergence between the Bolshevik and Menshevik appraisals of our bourgeois revolution as a whole from the standpoint of the proletariat's tasks. The Bolsheviks claimed for the proletariat the role of *leader* in the democratic revolution. The Mensheviks reduced its role to that of an 'extreme opposition'. The Bolsheviks gave a positive definition of the class character and class significance of the revolution, maintaining that a victorious revolution implied a 'revolutionary democratic dictatorship

of the proletariat and the peasantry'. The Mensheviks always interpreted the bourgeois revolution so incorrectly as to result in their acceptance of a position in which the role of the proletariat would be subordinate to and dependent on the bourgeoisie" (*Ibid.*, p. 111).

Many years have passed since these furious ideological battles were fought by Lenin. But their merit is that they can act as a guide to many situations even today. In presentday India one cannot escape noting that there is many an element, which while adhering and propagating the extremely good sounding and appealing slogan of an "extreme opposition", is at the same time in practice subordinating its practical policies to the needs of the bourgeoisie, rather of its extremely reactionary wing. The struggles waged by Lenin some six decades ago have a certain historical validity even in presentday conditions.

Take the case of economism. Would not the words of Lenin that "the infatuation with the strike movement and economic struggles gave rise to a peculiar form of social democratic opportunism, known as 'economism'" have a lesson for presentday Indian reality?

Lenin's struggle against revisionism had to continue even after the first Russian Revolution of 1905-7. The failure of the revolution brought in its wake a period of intense suppression, what is known as Stolypin reaction. Many a faintheart deserted the cause and the party those days. Voices began to appear for liquidation of the party, for adapting it to legal conditions. Lenin heroically resisted these trends and held aloft the banner of the party.

Liquidationism appeared not only in terms of party organisation. In this period of terror and stagnation there appeared trends in the philosophical field which sought to revise and repudiate Marxism as a system of thought, as a forward looking philosophy. Such assertions became almost a fashion. Revisionism now appeared in the sphere of philosophy and for a moment threatened to sweep Marxian materialism. It was in those days that Lenin wrote his celebrated monumental work

entitled *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. This profound yet razor sharp militant treatise smashed philosophical revisionism and upheld the revolutionary fighting theory of Marxism.

Yet another vital and crucial question on which a bitter fight had to be waged against revisionism was the "proposition of the dictatorship of the proletariat".

Soon after 1912 when the wave of revolutionary movement began to rise again in Russia, the question of what would be the class essence of the state power to be set up after the revolution, the question of the relation of the old bourgeois and bureaucratic state apparatus and the revolution, all these came to the fore as practical questions. They had to be theoretically combated and answered. Lenin dealt with these questions in his important work *The State and Revolution*. He based himself on the pregnant sentence of Marx that "Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the another. There corresponds to this also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*). Lenin however elaborated and developed a whole theory of the state and how revolution has to smash the old state machine and create its own new state whose class essence will be and has to be dictatorship of the proletariat.

During these days the reformists of the Second International propagated and upheld the erroneous theory that "the state" is something above classes, something that stands apart from the classes, as a sort of instrument of social equilibrium and arbitration. Lenin clearly demonstrated that whatever political form it may take the state is essentially an instrument of class rule, an instrument which has validity and efficacy because of the force it can and does use, because of its capacity to coerce. Proceeding from this fundamental Marxist thesis Lenin developed the thesis that the proletariat, having taken over power through revolution, will have to create its own instrument which would suppress bourgeois resistance and which would establish, maintain and enforce the new relations

of production. Such an instrument for this period of transition is the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The reformists, notable among them Kautsky, tried at first to evade answering this question. Later, on the eve of October Socialist Revolution, he openly attacked the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin fully exposed this veiled but dangerous revisionism of Kautsky in his pamphlet *The State and Revolution* written in August-September 1917. Actually Lenin could not write the seventh chapter of this booklet because of the October Revolution. "It is more pleasant and useful to go through the 'experience of revolution' than to write about it", he wrote in the postscript to the first edition.

Caustically commenting on Kautsky's effort to confuse the phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat" as only a form of government and from this proceeding to distort the word dictatorship to mean personal autocratic rule, Lenin clearly stated:

> "To speak of forms of government in this connection is trebly stupid, for every schoolboy knows that monarchy and republic are two different forms of government. It must be explained to Mr Kautsky that *both* these forms of government, like all transitional 'forms of government' under capitalism, are only variations of the *bourgeois state*, that is, of the *dictatorship of the bourgeoisie*" (*Selected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 50).

The essence of the question, therefore, according to Lenin was not form of government but of state. In his preface to *Civil War in France* by Marx, Engels had summed up the position:

> "In reality, however, the state is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another, and indeed in the democratic republic no less than in the monarchy" (Marx-Engels, *Selected Works*, 1968, p. 262).

While thus clearly and categorically rejecting the concept

of state as something above and apart from classes, and while reiterating the basic proposition that the proletariat to achieve the revolution and to transform society will have to create a state of its own without which success is impossible, Lenin also emphasised other aspects of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In that he drew lessons from the analysis Marx had made of the Paris Commune. Marx had written about the Commune thus:

> "The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time... Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people in Parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people, constituted in Communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for the workmen and managers in his business" (*Ibid.*, pp. 291 & 292).

Kautsky picked up the reference to universal suffrage and attacked the Soviet state as a departure from Marx's model of a proletarian state in as much as certain exploiting classes in Russia at that time had been disfranchised. Kautsky contrasted this with the universal suffrage of the Commune and thus sought to discredit the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Lenin rebutted this argument on a principled basis.

> "And it must be said now that the question of restricting the franchise is a nationally specific and not a general question of the dictatorship" (*Selected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 66).

Lenin dealing with this question in a historical perspective went on to say:

> "It would be a mistake, however, to guarantee in advance that the impending proletarian revolutions in Europe will all, or the majority of them, be necessarily accompanied by

restriction of the franchise for the bourgeoisie" (*Ibid.*, p. 66).

The key question, therefore, according to Lenin in the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat, was the breaking of the resistance of the bourgeoisie, and of forcibly suppressing the enemies of the proletariat. That is why Lenin posed the theoretical question thus "Is dictatorship of the proletariat possible without *infringing democracy* in relation to the *exploiting* class?" Lenin answered this question in the negative. There cannot be dictatorship of the proletariat without *infringing democracy* for the exploiting class.

While clearly stating this position of principle Lenin also stated:

> "In which countries, and given what national features of capitalism, democracy for the exploiters will be in one or another form restricted (wholly or in part), infringed upon, is a question of the specific national features of this or that capitalism, of this or that revolution" (*Ibid.*, pp. 66-67).

Lenin considered this proletarian state a million times more democratic for the masses. He says:

> "... *far more accessible* representation has been given to the workers and peasants; *their* Soviets have replaced the bureaucrats, or *their* Soviets have been put in control of the bureaucrats, and *their* Soviets have been authorised to elect the judges. This fact alone is enough for all the oppressed classes to recognise that Soviet power, i.e. the present form of dictatorship of the proletariat, is a million times more democratic than the most democratic bourgeois republic" (*Ibid.*, p. 60).

Bourgeois publicists and reformists starting from Kautsky have tried to distort and depict in black the concept of dictatorship of the proletariat, contraposing it to "democracy" in general. They have misused the word "dictatorship" to designate a state of authoritarianism and suppression. Behind

such cloaks they have tried to evade the basic question namely the essential need of suppression of the bourgeoisie. Such things are being done even by presentday revisionists. Lenin's profound teachings on this question therefore have a great vitality and validity even today. At the same time one has to understand that grave distortions had taken place in the application of the principle of dictatorship of the proletariat during the last period of Stalin. Lenin's teachings have profound validity in the context of correcting and avoiding in future such distortions of the concept of dictatorship of the proletariat.

While Lenin was merciless in his struggle against revisionist distortions of Marxism, he was equally emphatic against pedantic and dogmatic clinging to phrases and propositions even though they did not correspond to reality. He never hesitated in giving up or modifying any particular proposition or formulation of Marxist theory if it had outgrown reality, if the situation for which it held good no longer existed. Lenin painstakingly studied the new, analysed and advanced new propositions and this creative activity is his most outstanding contribution to Marxism. Many of those who try to study Lenin superficially or in a bookish manner are often baffled, it is beyond them to really grasp when a change or modification is revisionist and when it is a creative application of Marxism. But the answer to this question has been given by Lenin himself. Lenin said that the revisionist tendency assumes "... an infinite variety of forms, and that every more or less 'new' question, every more or less unexpected and unforeseen turn of events, even though it may change the basic line of development to an insignificant degree and only for the briefest period, will always inevitably give rise to one variety of revisionism or another" (*Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 51-52).

But if the basic line of development changed to a significant degree Lenin stood for evolving a new solution to the problem. He thus demonstrated in practice that Marxism is not a "mantra" to be learnt by heart and repeated without reference to existing reality. Marxism is a science, a revolu-

tionary method, a guide to action and its correct application necessarily should be based on a most concrete and thorough study of the existing reality.

Let us see a few instances.

When Marx and Engels had studied capitalism it was still in its growing and ascending stage. They therefore envisaged the possibility of a proletarian revolution commencing in one of the advanced capitalist countries, possibly England. They also envisaged the possibility of the revolution becoming victorious in all or in most of the capitalist countries simultaneously.

In the years that followed, world economy and the position of capitalism underwent many radical changes. Instead of the old "free competition" capitalism, came the stage of monopoly capitalism. In his wellknown work *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* Lenin analysed this phenomenon and drew the necessary conclusions.

> "Monopolies, oligarchy, the striving for domination and not for freedom, the exploitation of an increasing number of small or weak nations by a handful of the richest or most powerful nations—all these have given birth to those distinctive characteristics of imperialism which compel us to define it as parasitic or decaying capitalism" (*Ibid.*, p. 774).

Refuting the banalities of Kautsky, Lenin laid bare the fact that in this imperialist stage of capitalism all its contradictions get further intensified:

> "Imperialism is the epoch of finance capital and of monopolies, which introduce everywhere the striving for domination, not for freedom. Whatever the political system the result of these tendencies is everywhere reaction and an extreme intensification of antagonisms in this field. Particularly intensified become the yoke of national oppression and the striving for annexations, i.e. the violation of national independence (for annexation is nothing but the

violation of the right of nations to selfdetermination)" (*Ibid.*, p. 771).

From this profound analysis Lenin drew conclusions of practical revolutionary significance. He exposed the economic base of reformism in the labour movement, viz the superprofit derived from the colonies which is used to "bribe" the upper stratum of the working class, which Lenin termed as the "labour aristocracy".

From this he assessed the great significance of the revolutionary struggle for independence in the colonial and backward countries which he said the Communist International must support.

Lenin said that due to uneven development of capitalism and interimperialist contradictions the chain of imperialism will break at the weakest link. A socialist revolution can be successfully accomplished and socialism can be built in a single country. Today this proposition is taken as axiomatic. But in those days had the Bolsheviks not been armed with this new revolutionary proposition, they could not have successfully led and carried out the great October Socialist Revolution.

Of course, in advancing this proposition Lenin "modified" Marx. Those who only stick to the letter and miss his revolutionary methodology will fail to realise that in this "modification" Lenin really enriched Marxism.

Analysing the situation in their days Marx and Engels did envisage the possibility of a "peaceful" capture of power in a country like England.

Subsequent developments clearly showed that with the enormous growth of bureaucracy and military apparatus even in England such "peaceful" capture of power is ruled out.

Writing in *The State and Revolution*, Lenin said:

> "It is interesting to note, in particular, two points in the abovequoted argument of Marx. First, he restricts his conclusion to the continent. This was understandable in 1871, when Britain was still the model of a purely capitalist country, but without a militarist clique, and, to a considerable

degree, without a bureaucracy. Marx therefore excluded Britain, where a revolution, even a people's revolution, then seemed possible, and indeed was possible, *without* the precondition of destroying the 'readymade state machinery'.

"Today, in 1917, at the time of first great imperialist war, this restriction made by Marx is no longer valid" (*Ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 294-95).

True, here too Lenin "modified" Marx. But a closer study will show what he did is the essence of Marxist method.

When it became necessary Lenin not only "modified" Marx, he even "modified" himself.

Take the question of the peaceful taking over of power. Lenin himself, as stated above in his *The State and Revolution*, had emphasised that nowhere will it be possible to take over power by the proletariat except by recourse to an uprising and insurrection. But after the February 1917 revolution, when the "dual power" of the Provisional Government and of the Soviets existed side by side Lenin advanced the slogan of "All Power to the Soviets!" and distinctly outlined the possibility of passing over to the socialist revolution in a peaceful way.

But again, within months when the Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks betrayed the revolution and started compromising with the Provisional Government, Lenin wrote on 10 July in an article "The Political Situation":

"All hopes for a peaceful development of the Russian revolution have vanished for good...

"The slogan 'All Power to the Soviets!' was a slogan for peaceful development of the revolution which was possible in April, May, June and up to 5-9 July, i.e. up to the time when actual power passed into the hands of the military dictatorship. This slogan is no longer correct, for it does not take into account that power has changed hands and that the revolution has in fact been completely betrayed by the S-R's and Mensheviks" (*Ibid.*, p. 168).

And so in the same article Lenin gave the slogan:

"Let us gather forces, reorganise them, and resolutely prepare for the armed uprising" (*Ibid.*, p. 169).

Take the question of land. The Programme of the Bolsheviks contained the slogan of nationalisation of land. However even after the February 1917 revolution and right up to the eve of the October revolution the situation was that this slogan was not being understood and was not finding adequate response from the peasants themselves. So Lenin changed the slogan and accepted the agrarian programme of the Socialist Revolutionaries in its entirety which contained the slogan of land to the tiller. The decree on land drafted by Lenin on the second day after the revolution was for land to the tiller. Lenin says about it:

"At the very moment of the October revolution we entered into an informal but very important (and very successful) political bloc with the petty bourgeois peasantry by adopting the *Socialist Revolutionary* agrarian programme *in its entirety*, without a single alteration—i.e., we effected an undeniable compromise in order to prove to the peasants that we wanted, not to 'steamroller' them but to reach agreement with them" (*Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 381).

Even after the revolution when Lenin found that the earlier ideas of building socialism and communism as if at one stroke or rather in quick successive strokes, that this idea was not practicable, he unhesitatingly ushered in the New Economic Policy. On what basis and why it was done it is better to quote Lenin himself at length:

"Borne along on the crest of the wave of enthusiasm, rousing first the political enthusiasm and then the military enthusiasm of the people, we expected to accomplish the economic tasks just as great as the political and military tasks we had accomplished by relying directly on this enthusiasm. We expected—or perhaps it would be truer to say that we presumed without having given it adequate consideration—to be able to organise the state production and the state distribution of products on communist lines in a small

peasant country directly as ordered by the proletarian state. Experience has proved that we were wrong. It appears that a number of transitional stages were necessary—state capitalism and socialism—in order to *prepare*—to prepare by many years of effort—for the transition to communism. Not directly relying on enthusiasm, but aided by the enthusiasm engendered by the great revolution, and on the basis of personal interest, personal incentive and business principles, we must first set to work in this small peasant country to build solid gangways to socialism by way of state capitalism...

"And we, who during these three or four years have learned a little to make abrupt changes of front (when abrupt changes of front are needed), have begun zealously, attentively and sedulously (although still not zealously, attentively and sedulously enough) to learn to make a new change of front, namely, the New Economic Policy" (*Ibid.*, p. 642).

I have quoted these paras of Lenin at great length on purpose. Today there are many, and of course foremost among them are the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party who, swearing by Lenin, deny the significance of intermediate stages, deny personal incentives and business principles as "return to bourgeois capitalism"; and who propagate all this in the name of "upholding" Lenin, under the banner of "Long Live Leninism!"

Those who under this banner try rigidly and dogmatically to cling to some proposition of Lenin, even though the situation has changed so much, should realise that real fidelity to Lenin implies capacity and willingness to concretely study reality and modify a proposition if the situation so warrants. This great quality of Lenin, this great mastery over the Marxist method (and not in words alone), this is the essence of Leninism. That is why when need arose Lenin not only "modified" Marx, he "modified" even himself.

A study into these aspects of Leninism will obviously be incomplete if one does not grasp also Lenin's most vitriolic

tirades against sectarianism and adventurism. Lenin has written many pamphlets on this question, the most notable being *"Left-wing" Communism—An Infantile Disorder.*

Sectarianism and adventurism is the tactic which bases itself not on the concrete assessment of the revolutionary situation but on subjectivism, a tactic which tries to rush too far ahead of the masses and this leads to the isolation of the vanguard.

Actually Frederick Engels in his *Programme of the Blanquist Communards* had ridiculed this method by saying:

> "What childish innocence it is to present one's own impatience as a theoretically convincing argument" (quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 376).

Immediately after the Soviet revolution some very wrong, almost romantic, ideas had spread in the socialist and communist movement about the revolution. Bolshevism was understood as something which rejected all compromises or which meant renunciation of tactic to work in bourgeois parliaments or in reactionary trade unions, etc. Lenin waged an uncompromising war against such understanding. Discussing the oftrepeated formulation of no compromises, no manoeuvres, Lenin wrote:

> "To carry on a war for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie, a war which is a hundred times more difficult, protracted and complex than the most stubborn of ordinary wars between states, and to renounce in advance any change of tack, or any utilisation of a conflict of interests (even if temporary) among one's enemies, or any conciliation or compromise with possible allies (even if they are temporary, unstable, vacillating or conditional allies)—is that not ridiculous to the extreme?" (*Ibid.*, p. 379).

According to Lenin one cannot renounce in principle to work in bourgeois parliaments or not to use legal avenues of work. Of course in a revolutionary situation even boycott of parliament too is justified. Lenin justified the Bolshevik boycott of Consultative Parliament in August 1905. But says:

"It would, however, be highly erroneous to apply this experience blindly, imitatively and uncritically to *other* conditions and *other* situations... Today, when we look back at this fully completed historical period, whose connection with the subsequent periods has now become quite clear, it becomes most obvious that in 1908-14 the Bolsheviks *could not have* preserved (let alone strengthened and developed) the core of the revolutionary party of the proletariat, had they not upheld, in a most strenuous struggle, the viewpoint that it was *obligatory* to combine legal and illegal forms of struggle, and that it was *obligatory* to participate even in a most reactionary parliament and in a number of other institutions hemmed in by reactionary laws (sick benefit societies, etc.)" (*Ibid*, pp. 349-50).

Some of the left communists came out with the formulation that parliamentary struggles have become politically obsolete. Lenin answered the question:

"Parliamentarianism has become 'historically obsolete'. That is true in the propaganda sense. However, everybody knows that this is still a far cry from overcoming it in *practice*...

"In September-November 1917, did we, the Russian Bolsheviks, not have *more* right than any western communists to consider that parliamentarianism was politically obsolete in Russia? Of course we did... Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks did *not* boycott the Constituent Assembly, but took part in the elections both before *and after* the proletariat conquered political power" (*Ibid.*, pp. 367 & 370).

In a very profound manner Lenin emphasised the necessity of the struggle against sectarianism:

"The immediate objective of the class conscious vanguard of the international working class movement, i.e. the communist parties, groups and trends, is to be able to *lead* the broad masses (who are still, for the most part, apathetic, inert, dormant and convention ridden) to their new position, or rather, to be able to lead, *not only* their own party but

also these masses in their advance and transition to the new position. While the first historical objective (that of winning over the class conscious vanguard of the proletariat to the side of Soviet power and the dictatorship of the working class) could not have been reached without a complete ideological and political victory over opportunism and social chauvinism, the second and immediate objective, which consists in being able to lead the *masses* to a new position ensuring the victory of the vanguard in the revolution, cannot be reached without the liquidation of left doctrinairism, and without a full elimination of its errors" (*Ibid*, p. 399).

Even though Lenin wrote this fifty years ago how strikingly vivid it is even today.

To really understand and assimilate Lenin it is necessary to study his methodology, his great quality to study, analyse and master each situation. Without this only formal fidelity to Lenin would mean getting only the husk but missing the essence.

# LENIN

# And the Comintern

C. UNNI RAJA

Lenin was the guiding spirit behind the founding of the Third, Communist, International in March 1919. Following the outbreak of the imperialist world war, the Second International disintegrated into hostile groups; majority of the leaders of the official socialist parties in European countries, shamelessly defying the declared policy of the Second International itself on the question of war, openly went over to the camp of the bourgeoisie of their own country. They supported their imperialist government in the war, betraying the cause of the working class and of all working people, throwing to the winds the fundamental tenets of proletarian internationalism.

It was Lenin who clearly saw and scientifically proved that the period of comparatively peaceful development of capitalism was over, that an entirely new period in the worldwide struggle of the proletariat for emancipation from the yoke of capital had opened. Immediately after the outbreak of the world war, he wrote:

"The Second International is dead, overcome by opportunism. Down with opportunism, long live the Third International, purged not only of 'turncoats' (as Golos wishes) but of opportunism as well.

"The Second International did its share of useful preparatory work in preliminarily organising the proletarian masses during the long, 'peaceful' period of the most brutal capitalist slavery and most rapid capitalist progress in the last third of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. To the Third International falls the task of organising the proletarian forces for a revolutionary onslaught against the capitalist governments, for civil war against the bourgeoisie of all countries for the capture of political power, for the triumph of socialism!" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 21, pp. 40-41).

But the founding of a new International was not an easy task. Lenin and the Bolsheviks headed by him had to wage a fierce and continuous struggle against opportunism of various shades and rally and consolidate the internationalist revolutionary wing of the socialist parties in various countries. Breaking away from the social-chauvinist rightwing official socialist parties, those who opposed the imperialist war and took up an internationalist position held two international conferences at Zimmerwald (September 1915) and Kienthal (April 1916) in Switzerland. But soon a differentiation began to take shape within the Zimmerwald International. The Left Internationalists headed by Lenin put forward a militant programme of revolutionary struggle against war and imperialism. But the majority, under the leadership of Kautsky, opposed it and took up a vacillating position. Lenin called them the "centrists".

So in his famous "April Theses" ("Tasks of the Proletariat in our Revolution") after the victory of the February revolution in Russia, Lenin suggested to the Bolshevik party that "The Zimmerwald bog can no longer be tolerated... We must break with this International immediately... It is we who must found, and right now, without delay, a *new*, revolutionary,

proletarian International, or rather, we must not fear to acknowledge publicly that this new International is *already established* and operating" (*Selected Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 44-45). But the April Conference of the RSDLP(B) did not agree with Lenin on this point. Lenin said that the conference made a mistake. "By remaining in Zimmerwald we (even against our will) are helping delay the creation of the Third International; we are indirectly hampering its foundation, being burdened with the dead ballast of the ideologically and politically dead Zimmerwald" (*Ibid.*, p. 51).

In the midst of the terrible imperialist world war, because of the victory of the February revolution, Russia with its dual power of bourgeois-democratic government at the centre and Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in the localities (especially in the two capital cities of Moscow and Petrograd) had become the most *free* among the belligerent countries. Hence Lenin said: "To whom much is given, of him much is required. No other country in the world is as free as Russia is *now*. Let us make use of this freedom... in a bold, honest, proletarian, Liebknecht way *to found the Third International*, an International uncompromisingly hostile both to the social-chauvinist traitors and to the vacillating 'centrists' " (*Ibid.*, p. 46).

Lenin insisted on immediately establishing a new International to rally all the really revolutionary and internationalist forces of the working class, to conduct an uncompromising struggle against traitors and vacillators. He considered it the internationalist duty of the Bolsheviks in Russia to take the initiative for founding such a new International. But he had to wait for another two years to realise that.

By that time, the October socialist revolution in Russia had triumphed. Naturally it stimulated a powerful upsurge of the revolutionary working class and national-liberation movement throughout the world. The workers' revolution in Finland (January 1918), the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Austro-Hungary and the liberation struggle in the colonial regions of the empire (end of 1918), the revolution in Germany (November 1918) were landmarks of this upsurge.

The first communist parties in capitalist countries were formed in the course of the revolutionary struggles of 1918 in Finland, Austria, Argentina, Netherlands, Hungary, Poland, Germany, etc. Thus, as pointed out by Lenin, in his concluding speech at the First, founding, Congress of the Communist International in March 1919,

> "That we have been able to gather, despite all the persecution and all the difficulties created by the police, that we have been able without any serious differences and in a brief space of time to reach important decisions on all the vitally urgent questions of the contemporary revolutionary epoch, we owe to the fact that the proletarian masses of the whole world, by their action, have brought up these questions in practice and begun to tackle them.
>
> "All we have had to do here has been to record the gains already won by the people in the process of their revolutionary struggle" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 28, p. 476).

Even earlier, in January 1919, in his "Letter to the Workers of Europe and America" Lenin said: "The *foundation* of a genuinely proletarian, genuinely internationalist, genuinely revolutionary Third International, the *Communist International*, became *a fact* when the German Spartacus League... changed its name to the Communist Party of Germany. Though it has not yet been officially inaugurated, the Third International actually exists" (*Ibid.*, pp. 429-30).

By that time, under Lenin's guidance, preliminary steps had already been taken to call the founding congress of the new International. Lenin directed and participated in drawing up a draft Manifesto called "For the First Congress of the Communist International". It expounded the basic principles of the new International. It was published on 24 January 1919 in the Soviet press. In January 1919 itself took place a meeting of the representatives of a number of communist and socialist parties and groups in Moscow which adopted a decision to call on 39 organisations to begin "discussion of the convening of a world communist congress". The delegation of the Russian

Communist Party (B) which participated in this meeting was headed by Lenin. Again, just before the opening of the congress, Lenin took the initiative to call a meeting of a number of delegations, which had already reached Moscow, to draw up a preliminary agenda, prepare the list of main speakers and decide on the composition of various committees.

## II

Lenin, despite his heavy and difficult responsibilities as the head of the young Soviet Socialist Republic, struggling against the desperate onslaught of the external and internal enemies, despite his failing health, attended all the four congresses of the Comintern which were held during his lifetime, found time to carry on a continuous correspondence with leaders of the young communist parties of different countries, giving them advice, pointing out their mistakes and helping them to work out correct tactics and policies. It was Lenin who made the key reports and drafted the main documents elaborating the general line for the world communist movement at all these four congresses, which have become classics of Marxism-Leninism.

In the first, founding, congress in March 1919, Lenin made a report and submitted the Theses on Proletarian Dictatorship and Bourgeois Democracy. The attitude towards bourgeois democracy and proletarian dictatorship was then the crucial question that demarcated the truly revolutionary Marxist vanguard of the working class from all types and hues of reformists, revisionists and centrists who waxed eloquent about "pure democracy" as against the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin's theses on the dictatorship of the proletariat stressed that communists must base their activity on the necessity of a socialist revolution and the replacement of the bourgeois state by a state of a new type, by the dictatorship of the working class which is a higher type of democracy, for "proletarian dictatorship must inevitably entail not only a change in democratic forms and institutions, generally speaking, but precisely such a change as provides an unparalleled extension of the actual enjoyment of

democracy by those oppressed by capitalism—the toiling classes" (*Ibid.*, p. 465).

The Second Congress of the Comintern was held in July-August 1920. Lenin had just completed fifty years. The delegates to the congress paid him glorious tributes and expressed their warm affection and respect to the great leader of the international working class. It was at this congress that the greatness of Lenin, as a master-tactician of the world working class movement, was revealed in its full vitality and richness.

Just on the eve of the congress, Lenin published his pamphlet *"Leftwing" Communism—An Infantile Disorder* which set the tone for the entire discussion in the congress. For the past so many years, he had been conducting an uncompromising struggle against opportunism and social-chauvinism. He was advocating a complete break with them. With the formation of the Comintern and independent communist parties in leading capitalist countries, a new danger from the "left" appeared and he lost no time to take up the cudgels against it.

> "The proletarian vanguard has been won over ideologically. That is the main thing. Without this, not even the first step towards victory can be made. But that is still quite a long way from victory. Victory cannot be won with a vanguard alone. To throw only the vanguard into the decisive battle, before the entire class, the broad masses have taken up a position either of direct support for the vanguard, or at least of sympathetic neutrality towards it and of precluded support for the enemy, would be, not merely foolish, but criminal. Propaganda and agitation alone are not enough for an entire class, the broad masses of the working people, those oppressed by capital, to take up such a stand. For that, the masses must have their own political experience. Such is the fundamental law of all great revolutions, which has been confirmed with compelling force and vividness, not only in Russia, but in Germany as well...
>
> "The immediate objective of the class-conscious van-

guard of the international working class movement, i.e. the communist parties, groups and trends, is to be able to *lead* the broad masses (who are still, for the most part, apathetic, inert, dormant and convention-ridden) to their new position, or, rather, to be able to lead, *not only* their own party but also these masses in their advance and transition to the new position. While the first historical objective (that of winning over the class-conscious vanguard of the proletariat to the side of Soviet power and the dictatorship of the working class) could not have been reached without a complete ideological and political victory over opportunism and social-chauvinism, the second and immediate objective, which consists in being able to lead the *masses* to a new position ensuring the victory of the vanguard in the revolution, cannot be reached without the liquidation of left doctrinairism, and without a full elimination of its errors" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 31, pp. 92-93).

To wage a successful struggle, ideologically and politically against "left" doctrinairism and sectarianism, Lenin brilliantly summed up the experience of the Bolshevik party in correctly elaborating and applying revolutionary strategy and tactics. But he wanted the communists in other countries not to copy it mechanically; he urged them to utilise it creatively. He pointed out that unity of the internationalist tactics of the world communist movement demanded not elimination of diversity, not abolition of national distinctions, "but the application of the fundamental principles of communism (Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat), which will *correctly modify* these principles in certain *particulars*, correctly adapt and apply them to national and national-state distinctions" (*Ibid.*, p. 92).

In *"Leftwing" Communism—An Infantile Disorder*, Lenin through concrete examples and trenchant polemics emphasised that:

(1) It was fundamentally wrong, like certain German "lefts", to declare all political parties as a bourgeois category

and demand abolition of the parties of the working class also. Without a revolutionary Marxist party, the working class cannot win political power, cannot retain and consolidate it, cannot achieve complete victory of socialism. And the party cannot fulfil its tasks without truly iron discipline in its ranks and without the fullest and devoted support of the working class. "Repudiation of party principle and of party discipline... is tantamount to completely disarming the proletariat *in the interests of the bourgeoisie*" (*Ibid.*, pp. 43-44).

(2) The principal task of the communist parties in the capitalist countries is to overcome bourgeois influence over the masses, win over the majority of the working class and working people to their side. This is a very difficult task. In order to carry it out, it is necessary to work among the masses and not fence oneself off from them by artificial and childish "left" slogans. Hence Lenin denounced: a) the assertion of the "lefts" that communists should not work in reactionary, social reformist trade unions, (b) the sectarian arguments of those who considered that communists should not participate in bourgeois parliaments; (c) the "leftist" contention that a revolutionary proletarian party cannot and ought not make any compromises with other parties.

(3) Subjectivism in appraising events, lack of an objective approach to the existing situation and conditions of struggle, a desire to skip stages of advance are the distinctive features of "left" opportunism that led to reckless and ill-considered actions. Because of their dogmatism the "lefts" refuse to consider the changing situation, to develop and apply revolutionary theory creatively. Communist parties have to be flexible to the utmost in their tactics. They must master all the means of struggle, all forms or aspects of social activity: they must be able to impart new content to old forms and devise new forms of work; they must be able to combine illegal and all the legal methods of struggle, must be always ready to pass from one form to another in the quickest manner possible, whenever the situation and the conditions of struggle change.

## III

The Second Congress of the Comintern was the most important and creative congress in the sense that it laid down not only the constitution and rules of the new international organisation, but also it defined the basic theses, both of principle and of practical policy, on all the great questions facing the world communist movement. And it was Lenin who drafted the principal resolutions of the congress—the theses on the basic tasks of the Communist International, on the national and colonial questions, on the agrarian question and on the conditions of affiliation to the Comintern.

Apart from elaborating the general line of advance, that of organising and consolidating, in all countries, genuinely revolutionary mass communist parties—for which it was necessary, *firstly* to fight ideologically and politically "left" doctrinairism and sectarianism; *secondly*, for all communists to go deeper into the masses and to work in close contact with them; and *thirdly*, to lay down strict conditions for affiliation to the Comintern in order to prevent opportunists getting into the organisation—Lenin made a great contribution to the strategy and tactics of the world communist movement by his theses on the national and colonial question as well as on work in the countryside.

Lenin in his theses on the national and colonial question broke new ground in elaborating the conception of the development of the international revolution against world imperialism on the basis of close alliance of the Soviet Republic and the working class in the developed capitalist countries with the national liberation movement of all the oppressed peoples. Opposing the erroneous and sectarian views of M. N. Roy, Lenin stressed that the communists should support all national liberation movements that were really revolutionary and contributed to the destruction of imperialism. The rise of the socialist state and its leading role in the general world revolutionary movement opened up before the peoples fighting for

national liberation the prospect of going over to socialism, bypassing the capitalist stage of development.

Lenin's theses on the agrarian question adopted by the congress stressed that an alliance between the working class and the peasantry was of decisive importance for the future of the entire revolutionary struggle, that only if the proletariat rallied round itself the working masses of the countryside would it be able to accomplish its historic task of overthrowing capitalism and building socialism. The theses on the agrarian question defined the policy of the communist parties towards different sections of the peasantry, both during the period of struggle for power and after the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

By the time the Third Congress of the Comintern met in June-July 1921, the international situation had considerably changed. The imperialist interventionists and the internal counterrevolutionary forces in Soviet Russia were decisively defeated. But the revolutionary struggles in the capitalist countries began to slow down. The bourgeoisie succeeded in crushing the activities of the working class in a number of countries. In this they were assisted by the treacherous policy of the rightwing Social Democrats. The bourgeoisie was mounting an offensive against the working people. This demanded a changeover to a defensive struggle and accordingly a new policy by the communist parties.

At the congress Lenin spoke in defence of the tactics of the Comintern. In 1920, Lenin characterised the "leftist" mistakes as an "infantile disorder". At the Third Congress he regarded left doctrinaire tendencies and sectarianism with their "theory of offensive" as having become the principal danger for the communist movement: "If the congress is not going to wage a vigorous offensive against such errors, against such 'leftist' stupidities, the whole movement is doomed" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 468). Again he repeated that, whereas the first stage in the formation and development of the communist parties was "a definite, final, unambiguous and determined break with reformism... The second stage is by no means

a repetition of revolutionary slogans. It will be the adoption of our wise and skilful decisions, which will always be such, and which will always say: fundamental revolutionary principles must be adapted to the specific conditions in the various countries" (*Ibid.*, p. 465).

Why the fundamental revolutionary principles must be adapted to the specific conditions in each country? To win over the masses, not only the majority of the working class, but also the vast peasant masses, to the side of revolution. He said that the Bolsheviks were victorious in Russia, not only because "the undisputed majority of the working class was on our side... but also because half the army, immediately after our seizure of power, and ninetenths of the peasants, in the course of some weeks, came over to our side; we were victorious because we adopted the agrarian programme of the Socialist Revolutionaries instead of our own, and put it into effect" (*Ibid.*, pp. 474-75).

How to win over the masses? By adopting the tactics of united front. "The purpose and aim of the united front tactics is to draw even broader masses of workers into the struggle against capital", Lenin said, "not shrinking before making repeated offers even to leaders of the Second and 'Two-and-a-half' Internationals to wage such a joint struggle". The communists must strive to unite the masses on the basis of joint action in defence of the most urgent, vital interests of the workers—their economic demands as well as democratic rights and freedoms.

At Lenin's suggestion, the Executive Committee of the Comintern took steps for a conference of the representatives of the three Internationals—the Second, the Two-and-a-half* and the Communist. Lenin held that such a conference (which took place in Berlin in April 1922) would give the communists an opportunity to extend the struggle for working class unity and

* The Two-and-a-half International was formed in the beginning of 1921 by centrist parties and groups which had temporarily left the Second International under the pressure of the revolutionary struggles of the workers. It rejoined the Second International in 1923.

to expose the wrong political position of the rightwing socialists.

By the time the Fourth Congress of the Comintern was held in November 1922, Lenin was already ill, after his first stroke in May 1922. Still by iron will and at the cost of terrible exhaustion, he attended the congress and gave a report on "Five Years of the Russian Revolution and Prospects of World Revolution". This was the last public speech he was able to make to the international working class movement. With regard to the resolution on the organisational structure of the communist parties adopted at the Third Congress he said:

> "The resolution is an excellent one, but it is almost entirely Russian, that is to say, everything in it is based on Russian conditions. This is its good point, but it is also its failing. It is its failing because I am sure that no foreigner can read it... even if they read it, they will not understand it because it is too Russian... because it is thoroughly imbued with the Russian spirit... I have the impression that we made a big mistake with this resolution, namely, that we blocked our own road to further success...
>
> "... The resolution is too Russian, it reflects Russian experience. That is why it is quite unintelligible to foreigners, and they cannot be content with hanging it in a corner like an icon and praying to it. Nothing will be achieved that way. They must assimilate part of the Russian experience... the most important thing in the period we are now entering is to study. We are studying in the general sense. They, however, must study in the special sense, in order that they may really understand the organisation, structure, method and content of revolutionary work. If they do that, I am sure the prospects of world revolution will be not only good, but excellent" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 33, pp. 430-32).

That was Lenin's final advice to the communists throughout the world. It is of supreme importance for the fraternal parties to creatively master the experience of Bolshevik party,

the Russian communists; but a stereotyped, mechanical copying of the Russian model is impermissible, it would block the road to further success. What is necessary is to really understand the organisation, structure, method and content of revolutionary work.

# LENIN

# And the Party

AVTAR SINGH MALHOTRA

Lenin was above all a revolutionary—a revolutionary par excellence, both in theory and practice. In 1902 he declared: "Give us an organisation of revolutionaries and we will overturn Russia."

In 1917 the Bolsheviks led by Lenin did overturn Russia, they achieved the greatest revolution in history and as a result Soviet Russia became the first country to build socialism. The organisation of revolutionaries that Lenin organised, built and brought to maturity, that later came to be known as the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, blazed humanity's path to socialism, saved mankind from fascist enslavement and is now showing the way forward to communism and lasting peace. Lenin elaborated the ideological, theoretical and organisational principles for this party which has become the model for communist parties the world over. This aspect of Lenin's contribution to the theory and practice of socialism is most valuable for Indian revolutionaries and for all those who really want to take India forward to socialism. Today when

our country stands at the crossroads Lenin's teaching on the party is a guide to action in one of the key sectors of the battle for democracy and socialism. For it would be going against the lessons of history—Indian and world history—to imagine that without a powerful and mass Communist Party this battle can be won.

Basing himself on the postulates of Marx and Engels about the role and character of the Communist Party as the vanguard of the working class, as its political party which guides it in the fulfilment of its historic mission, as the force which leads the working people in the revolutionary struggle for proletarian power and which leads the transformation of society from capitalism to socialism and communism, Lenin elaborated an integrated theory of the Communist Party, its organisational principles and the norms and standards of its internal life. He also worked out a scientifically grounded plan for party building which he put into practice with his characteristic vigour, perseverance and principled firmness. This he did in the course of consistent struggles against the opportunism that was corroding the working class movement in the closing years of the nineteenth and the opening years of the twentieth centuries.

After the death of Engels the Second International was engulfed by opportunism, specially revisionism. The parties of the Second International had become only election machines, adapted for fighting elections and parliamentary work and unfit for revolutionary struggle. As in the bourgeois parties the parliamentary wing dominated these reformist Social-Democratic Parties. The new period that opened with the turn of the century when capitalism had ripened into imperialism and when revolutionary battles came on the agenda, the situation posed new complicated tasks before the working class. These parties bred and nurtured in conditions of peaceful, parliamentary struggle were unable to cope with the new revolutionary tasks. The opportunist leaders had thus landed the working class movement into a deep crisis. It was Lenin

who rescued it and led it on to the path of revolutionary struggle.

Lenin held that what was needed was *a party of a new type*, a revolutionary party of the working class based on Marxism, a party which would be irreconcilable towards the bourgeoisie, a party which would reorganise its entire work on new, revolutionary lines and take up all the tasks of preparing and mobilising the masses for revolution. And Lenin led the struggle to build such a party first in Russia and then on a world scale. He led this party of the new type in the course of all the vicissitudes of the three Russian revolutions. The 1905-7 Russian revolution was the first revolution in history which was led by a revolutionary working class party and though it failed its experience proved highly valuable both for the masses and the leadership. Lenin stated later that it was "a dress rehearsal" for 1917.

The February (1917) revolution was the first to begin the breakthrough of the world imperialist front and the 1917 October revolution was the first victorious socialist revolution in history and its victory was due above all to the fact that it was led by the party that Lenin had organised, led and trained.

It is not for nothing that the word "Leninist" has become synonymous with communist and Lenin's party the model for all communist parties.

Lenin elaborated his views on the party and on party building in the main in the first four or five years of the twentieth century, i.e. at a time when imperialism had matured on a world scale and when Russia was on the eve of the first revolution of 1905.

*Iskra* started publication on 11 December 1900. In various articles in *Iskra* such as "The Urgent Tasks of Our Movement", "Where to Begin?", "Letter to a Comrade on Our Organisational Tasks", etc. and in his two books *What Is To Be Done?* (1902) and *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* (1904) and in his speeches and reports in the Second Congress of the RSDLP (1903) and the Third Congress (1905), Lenin elaborated the ideological, theoretical and organisational principles of the

working class party. This he did in the course of a furious struggle with such opportunist trends as the Economists and the Mensheviks—who had their own theories and plans about the party, following from their reformist ideology. It was in 1903 that the Bolsheviks clearly demarcated themselves from the Mensheviks and the new trend—the Leninist trend in the working class movement—was born. This revolutionary trend became the Russian Communist Party and the guiding force of the revolution. After the October revolution Lenin took the lead in founding the Third (Communist) International (March 1919) and Lenin's teaching on the party became the precious heritage of the international communist movement which rejected the plea of the opportunists that Bolshevism is only a specifically Russian phenomenon and upheld the proposition that Leninism has universal validity, that Lenin's teaching on the party is a guide to action for all.

The statutes of the Communist International and the party rules or constitutions of individual parties embodied these Leninist principles and norms, keeping in mind the Leninist precept that the principles are to be applied as a guide to action, not as a mantram, and that the forms in which they are to be embodied must vary according to the changing conditions of time and place.

## II

Lenin fought against all tendencies that in any way undermined or sought to underestimate the role of the party. He called it "the mind, the conscience and the honour of our era".

He took up cudgels against the Economists as the trend within the working class movement that was the biggest obstacle at the time to the building of a revolutionary Marxist party. The Economists idealised the spontaneously developing mass movement and undermined the role of consciousness and organisation in it. They saw the need only for the economic struggle against the employers and the government. "The

economic struggle is for the workers and the political struggle for the liberals", the Credo of the Economists stated. Thus they abjured the political struggle, the fight for power, which Lenin showed to be the key question of all revolutions. As they had abjured revolution they did not see the need for a political party of the working class nor for imparting class political consciousness to it.

Lenin exposed and denounced the Economists as reformists, as people who had abjured revolution and surrendered before the bourgeoisie.

In the very first issue of *Iskra* Lenin had prophetically written:

> "Before us, in all its strength, towers the enemy fortress which is raining shot and shell upon us, mowing down our best fighters. We must capture this fortress, and we will capture it, if we unite all the forces of the awakening proletariat with all the forces of the Russian revolutionaries into one party which will attract all that is vital and honest in Russia."

Now in his *What Is To Be Done?* combating the Economists Lenin elaborated his theory of *the party as the revolutionising, leading and organising force of the working class movement.*

He explained the need for the political party

> "in order that the bulk of a certain class may learn to understand its interests and its positions, in order that it may learn to pursue its own policies, requires precisely that the advanced elements of this class should be organised immediately and at all costs even if those elements at first constitute a negligible part of the class."

And again,

> "Only a political party of the working class, i.e., a Communist Party, is capable of uniting, educating and organising such a vanguard of the proletariat and the whole mass of the working people, a vanguard which is alone able to

resist the inevitable vacillations of this mass, the inevitable traditions and relapses of trade unionist narrowness or trade unionist prejudices amidst the proletariat, and to lead all the joint activities of the whole proletariat, i.e. to lead the proletariat politically and through it to lead all the masses of the working people."

What type of party does the working class need? Lenin answered:

"Only the Communist Party, if it is really the vanguard of the revolutionary class, if it comprises all the finest representatives of that class, if it consists of fully conscious and staunch communists who have been educated and steeled by the experience of a persistent revolutionary struggle, and if it has succeeded in linking itself inseparably with the whole life of its class and, through it, with the whole mass of the exploited, and in completely winning the confidence of this class and this mass—only such a party is capable of leading the proletariat in a final, most ruthless and decisive struggle against all the forces of capitalism. On the other hand, it is only under the leadership of such a party that the proletariat is capable of displaying the full might of its revolutionary onslaught, and of overcoming the inevitable apathy and occasional resistance of that small minority, the labour aristocracy, who have been corrupted by capitalism, the old trade union and cooperative leaders, etc.—only then will it be capable of displaying its full might, which, because of the economic structure of capitalist society, is infinitely greater than its proportion of the population."

The party is part of the working class, its most advanced detachment. Therefore, it follows that it must forge unbreakable bonds with the class, win its confidence and trust and at the same time lead the class and not follow in the tail of the spontaneous movement.

The leading role of the party cannot be achieved by boasting and ranting that it is the vanguard but by hard work

amongst the masses, by practical leadership in their struggle, and by imbuing it with consciousness and organisation. Without unbreakable bonds with the nonparty masses the party would degenerate into a sect; it would be isolated and fail to lead.

In 1920 while criticising the sectarianism of some British communists Lenin wrote, "If the minority is unable to lead the masses, to link up closely with them, then it is not a party and is of no value whatever, no matter whether it calls itself a party..."

At the same time the distinction between the party and the class cannot be obliterated. The party must be a real vanguard. This is how Lenin formulates the relation between the vanguard and the class:

> "We are the party of a class, and therefore, *almost the entire class* (and in times of war, in the period of civil war, the entire class) should act under the leadership of our party, should adhere to our party as closely as possible. But it would be Manilovism and 'tailism' to think that the entire class, or almost the entire class, can ever rise, under capitalism, to the level of consciousness and activity of its vanguard, of its Social Democratic Party. No sensible social democrat has ever doubted that under capitalism even the trade union organisations (which are more primitive and more comprehensible to the undeveloped sections) are incapable of embracing the entire, or almost the entire, working class. To forget the distinction between the vanguard and the whole of the masses gravitating towards it, to forget the vanguard's constant duty of raising ever wider sections to its own advanced level, means simply to deceive oneself, to shut one's eyes to the immensity of our tasks, and to narrow down these tasks" (*One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*).

From this follow three important conclusions. The vanguard must be a conscious vanguard, it must be organised and must have indissoluble links with the class, with the masses.

## III

The Economists vulgarised Marxism and propagated that since everything in history was governed by immutable laws, the role of the conscious element in social development was insignificant. They held the same view as Bernstein that "the ultimate goal is nothing, the movement is everything". Thus according to them all conscious, planned activity was superfluous and harmful, the party should not guide the spontaneous working class movement, but should wait passively for the proletariat itself to come gradually to socialism.

Lenin vigorously combated this opportunist theory and pointed out that "without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement" and "the role of the vanguard fighter can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by the most advanced theory". In order that the working class lead society in the transition from capitalism to socialism, in order that it be enabled to fulfil its historic mission of bringing about the social revolution, the working class movement must be guided by the most advanced theory, the science of society, the theory that will equip it with knowledge of the laws of social development and thus enable it to understand and guide that development. Then alone can it conduct its political struggle successfully and achieve its aim. This advanced theory is Marxism and the party of the working class must base all its activities on Marxism.

This theory, this socialist consciousness, is not a spontaneous product but the product of science, and has to be introduced from outside. The party has to carry on a constant struggle against bourgeois ideology. The working class movement must fight on all three fronts—political, economic and ideological, then alone will its movement acquire great scope and momentum and be a really revolutionary movement.

Lenin made it clear that the spontaneous working class struggle is economic struggle, trade union struggle and this would not, of itself lead to socialist consciousness.

Lenin wrote:

"We have said that *there could not have been* social-democratic consciousness among the workers. It would have to be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc. The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical, and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals. By their social status, the founders of modern scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia. In the very same way, in Russia, the theoretical doctrine of social-democracy arose altogether independently of the spontaneous growth of the working class movement; it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of the development of thought among the revolutionary socialist intelligentsia. . .

"Hence, we had both the spontaneous awakening of the working masses, their awakening to conscious life and conscious struggle and a revolutionary youth, armed with social-democratic theory and straining towards the workers."

Lenin was categorical that

". . . all worship of spontaneity of the working class movement, all belittling the role of 'the conscious element', of the role of social-democracy, *means, quite independently of whether he who belittles that role desires it or not, a strengthening of the influence of the bourgeois ideology upon the workers.*"

Again,

"Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology formulated by the working masses themselves in the

process of their movement, the *only* choice is—either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for mankind has not created a 'third' ideology, and, moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a nonclass or an aboveclass ideology). Hence, to belittle the socialist ideology *in any way, to turn aside from it in the slightest degree* means to strengthen bourgeois ideology. There is much talk of spontaneity. But the *spontaneous* development of the working class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology, *to its development along the lines of the Credo programme;* for the spontaneous working class movement is trade unionism. . . and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie. Hence, our task, the task of social democracy, is *to combat spontaneity, to divert* the working class movement from this spontaneous, trade unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary social democracy."

Decades of experience of the trade union movement in the USA, in Great Britain and in several other West European countries confirm this brilliant analysis of Lenin that "the spontaneous working class movement is trade unionism. . . and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of workers by the bourgeoisie". The history of the Indian working class movement is also rich with the bitter lessons taught by the harmful results of the failure to pay due attention to theory, by the spontaneous tendency to concentrate on trade unionism coupled with neglect or underestimation of the importance of developing consciousness, of taking class politics and ideology to the workers. This tendency towards relying on spontaneity has been the most serious source of weakness of the working class movement in the country, despite its glorious tradition of heroic mass struggles and has acted as a brake on the movement.

The Political Report of the Patna (Eighth) Congress of the CPI sharply nailed down the weaknesses in this respect. After

noting "the growth of economism", "the absence of proper party orientation to our TU work" it said, "Party political propaganda and party building activity generally are grossly neglected. The increase in the party membership even in our TU strongholds is at best nominal. This explains why party cadres are not coming up from the working class. Even the TU movement itself suffers as a result of lack of functionaries and cadres."

How to overcome this weakness, to discharge this key task? Lenin elaborated it in detail in *What Is To Be Done?* Along with and besides trade union activities, which he never underrated, and general propaganda of Marxism Lenin stressed the important role of political agitation and propaganda among the working class masses and of mobilising them for political action in support of the other classes against the common class enemy.

> "Working class consciousness is not genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to *all* cases of tyranny, oppression, violence and abuse,. no matter *what class* is affected—unless they are trained, moreover, to respond from a social democratic point of view and no other. The consciousness of the working masses cannot be genuine class consciousness, unless the workers learn, from concrete, and above all from topical, political facts and events to observe *every* other social class in *all* the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical and political life; unless they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of *all* aspects of the life and activity of *all* classes, strata and groups of the population. Those who concentrate the attention, observation, and consciousness of the working class exclusively, or even mainly, upon itself alone are not social democrats; for the selfknowledge of the working class is indissolubly bound up, not solely, with a fully clear theoretical understanding—or rather, not so much with the theoretical, as with the practical, understanding— of the relationships between *all* the various classes of modern

society, acquired through the experience of political life." (*What Is To Be Done?*)

The instrument to impart class political consciousness and to lead the working class in the political struggle is the party which is a fusion of the working class movement with socialism. Hence the supreme importance of the theory of scientific socialism for the spontaneous working class movement and for the entire activity of the party. In defending the purity of Marxism against the onslaughts of the opportunists (the revisionists of the time) Lenin laid special emphasis on the necessity of developing theory further, of further enriching it with the experience of the practical movement. While making preparations for *Iskra* Lenin had written:

> "We do not regard Marxist theory as something completed and inviolable; on the contrary, we are convinced that it has only laid the cornerstone of the science which socialists *must* extend in all directions if they wish to keep pace with life."

Lenin's emphasis on theory, on ideology as the basis for the entire work of the Communist Party has three aspects, viz,

(i) fidelity to Marxism and uncompromising attitude towards all deviations from it and determined struggle against revisionism;
(ii) creative approach to theory and resolute struggle against dogmatism;
(iii) organic unity between theory and practice in the party's entire activity.

* * *

After the havoc caused by the split in the Communist Party of India in 1964 the selfcriticism made in the Organisational Report of the Bombay (Seventh) Party Congress drew attention to some of the failures in the sphere of ideological work in the past that created a fertile ground for splitting activities and contributed to the fact that over onethird of the

party membership split off and failed to understand the left-sectarian and disruptive line of the leaders who organised the rival party. While discussing this question the report made the following frank selfcriticism:

"The new understanding of the post-second-world-war situation and its consequent new slogans and the tactics regarding the cardinal issues facing humanity—prevention of a world war, peaceful coexistence, forms of struggle for transition to socialism, attitude to the newly liberated countries, etc. given by the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU and subsequently adopted and strengthened by the conference of communist and workers' parties in 1957 and 1960, were not properly discussed and explained to the entire party. Not only was this differently understood by different sections inside the party leadership but it was also variously explained to the party members. In general, we failed to fully educate the whole party on this new understanding.

"The understanding of the party on the Indian situation was very much dogmatic and sectarian and for a long period of time our party members have been educated on such understanding. No serious political-ideological effort was made to correct this understanding.

"Our 1951 Programme was exposed as dogmatist and sectarian by our own experience, but our party functioned without a programme for these ten years. This highlights the deep inroads which opportunism had made inside the party.

"Our party with its glorious record of 40 years in the service of the people (1925-1964) has not yet got a written history of its own. Ironically it is the enemies of our party who have written the history of our party to ridicule its glorious past with all the mass struggles led by it, heroes and sacrifices, picturing it as an antinational party having no interests of our country at heart. Pious resolutions were adopted several times at party congresses to produce an

authoritative history of the party but only to be forgotten soon after.

"These failures not only led to various differences inside the party but the differences continued to pile up and get accumulated."

This neglect of some of the key tasks of the party on the ideological front, the failure to integrate theory with the concrete practice of the Indian revolution, the failure to apply theory, to develop it by assessing and generalising the experience gained, the conciliatory attitude to deviations and anti-Marxist viewpoints, the failure to wage a relentless struggle against deviations from Marxism-Leninism and to carry this struggle to the party ranks and thus fight for ideological unification of the party—for all these failures the party had to pay dearly at the time of the split. The lesson has still to be learnt properly and the grave shortcomings in ideological work removed. The split itself and the rise of the socalled Naxalite trends, the propagation of the "new left" theories among the youth and students, the subtle and more refined methods employed by reaction in their anticommunist propaganda—all these as also the rise of the mass movement and the developing polarisation in the political field with the clash and conflicts of programmes and policies of classes, parties and trends rising to a new crescendo make it of supreme importance for the Communist Party to have a Leninist approach to theory, not merely in words, in reports and resolutions, but in practice, in the organisation of party work at the different levels of leadership, to mobilise all possible forces for this work and to make a radical break with the past and organise the ideological front as one of the three key fronts of the party's work. Without this all talk of taking the mass movement forward, of revolutionising it, of building the national democratic front, all talk of broadening and deepening the base of the party and winning and training the cadres and the masses and building a mass party will remain idle talk, "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing".

## IV

One of the most important questions which Lenin took up again and again for clarification and elaboration was the question of party membership—the qualifications and conditions for Communist Party membership, the duties and responsibilities of a member.

He discussed this question from all angles. He firmly opposed the tendencies then prevalent in the social democratic parties which belittled or denigrated the title of membership, for Lenin held that the fighting potential of the Marxist party depends to a great extent on its membership, *that the membership determines the type of party.* In *What Is To Be Done?* while criticising the Economists' outlook on the party and their narrow conception of the role and tasks of a party member (a social democrat according to the nomenclature then prevalent) Lenin wrote:

> "... the social democrat's ideal should not be a trade union secretary, but *the tribune of the people*, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalise all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth *before all* his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for *all* and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat."

Lenin assailed the narrow and opportunist outlook of the Economists who advocated that the social democratic trade union worker should only carry on the economic struggle of the workers and be indifferent to the political struggle, unconcerned with the interests and fate of other democratic classes, the potential allies of the working class. As the Economists did not want a revolutionary party their conception of a party member was also reformist.

However, it was at the time of the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (1903) during the discussion on the party rules the whole issue came up very sharply. The very first para relating to the qualifications for membership of the party became the subject of fierce controversy between Martov and Lenin. The two rival formulations of this crucial para were as follows:

Martov's formulation stated a party member could be "one who accepts its programme, supports the party financially and renders it regular personal assistance under the guidance of one of the organisations".

Lenin's formulation was as follows:

> "A member of the party is one who accepts its programme and who supports the party both financially and by personal participation in one of the party organisations."

Introducing his formulation Lenin emphasised "It is our task to safeguard the firmness, consistency and purity of our party. We must strive to raise the calling and importance of a party member higher, higher and still higher—and I therefore oppose Martov's formulation."

Two qualifications are common to both formulations—acceptance of the party programme and financial support of the party. But the difference was very vital on two points. Lenin insisted on the personal participation of the party member in one of the organisations, i.e. his participation in its life and activities and his subordination to its discipline. The member must belong to an organisation, take active part in it and be subject to its discipline. Martov, on the other hand, only wanted personal assistance by the member and his guidance by one of the organisations. Lenin charged Martov with forgetting "the distinction between the vanguard and the whole of the masses gravitating towards it. And it is just such a shutting of one's eyes, it is just such forgetfulness, to obliterate the distinction between those who associate themselves and those who belong, those who are conscious and active and those who only help."

The two conceptions followed from two contending conceptions of the party and its structure—one revolutionary and the other reformist. As the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* says,

> "The cardinal issue in the struggle over the first paragraph of the draft rules was the question of what the nature of the party should be. The Leninists fought for a monolithic, militant and disciplined revolutionary party with a clearly defined organisational structure, whereas the Martovites wanted an amorphous and heterogeneous, loose, petty bourgeois, opportunist party. Lenin fought for such internal party structure as would ensure its consistent revolutionary character."

Lenin laid great emphasis on the role of the party membership, for the membership affects the whole party. If the party is to be a revolutionary party, a real vanguard, a party of action then it must be compact. For this participation in party activities under party discipline is the crucial thing. This is the first essential precondition for ensuring unity of action, uniformity of discipline and homogeneity and compactness of organisation.

At the Second Congress the majority of delegates supported Martov and as a result Lenin's formulation was not included in the party rules. This was done at the time of Third Congress (1905) and ever since it has been accepted as one of the basic organisational principles of the Communist Party—not only of the Soviet Union but of all communist parties.

This does not mean that the communist parties follow a closed door policy on the question of membership recruitment or that they become only cadre parties and not mass parties. Lenin insisted on the closest links with the masses and the party rank and file being drawn from the fighting masses of the working class and other working people—the peasantry and the intelligentsia. But he insisted again and again that "there must be an absolutely clear definition of what member-

ship of the party implies". And he opposed opening the doors of the party to inactive people and to those who do not submit to party discipline.

Lenin wrote in *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*:

> "To forget the distinction between the vanguard and the whole of the masses gravitating towards it, to forget the vanguard's constant duty of *raising* ever wider sections to its own advanced level, means simply to deceive oneself, to shut one's eyes to the immensity of our tasks, and to narrow down these tasks. And it is just such a shutting of one's eyes, it is just such forgetfulness, to obliterate the difference between those who associate themselves and those who belong, those who are conscious and active and those who only help."

Again,

> "Only he is worthy of the high calling of a party member who conducts work among the masses in the true spirit of the party decisions."

Lenin attached the greatest importance to everyday work of the party membership. After the October revolution in his notes to the draft theses of the III Congress of the Comintern (1921) "Organisational Activities of the Communist Parties, on the Methods and Content of Their Work", Lenin wrote:

> "It should be stated at greater length that this is exactly what is lacking in most of the legal parties in the west. There is no *everyday* work (*revolutionary* work) by *every* member of the party.
>
> "This is the chief drawback.
>
> "To change this is the most difficult job of all.
>
> "*But this is most important.*"

Another very vital aspect of membership on which Lenin laid the greatest stress is the class composition of the membership. As the party of the proletariat the party must constantly exert to win the best elements of the working class to its

ranks. It does not mean that the party should not admit members from other classes and strata. It should especially recruit from the working peasantry, the intelligentsia, the youth, etc. The best elements from these strata can and should be recruited into the party and trained in proletarian ideology and discipline. But the party must entrench itself among the working class. Here Lenin attached particular importance to the bigger factories and said, "Every factory must be our fortress".

He also constantly laid stress on training and promoting working class cadres to leading party bodies.

He did not confine himself to precepts, but in his organisational activities he showed how to do this and what supreme importance he attached to it.

## V

The most important organisational principle which regulates the structure, the activities and internal life of the party is democratic centralism, enunciated first by Marx and Engels and vindicated, elaborated, concretised and consistently implemented by Lenin. All along this principle has been under vicious attack by revisionists of all shades and the attacks have been intensified in the recent period. Lenin firmly upheld the principle and explained that democratic centralism is needed in order that "the *organising* role of the proletariat (and that is its *principal* role) may be exercised correctly, successfully, victoriously".

Lenin held that democratic centralism meant an organic fusion of the two principles of democracy and centralism. They are inseparable. Both of them arose from the very aims, nature and character of the working class movement.

In his book *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* published in May 1904 Lenin gave battle to the Mensheviks and elaborated the organisational principles of the party. He pointed out that the party is not only the vanguard of the working class but also an organised detachment of the working class.

It can carry out its role only if it is organised and welded together by unity of will, unity of action and unity of discipline.

> "In its struggle for power the proletariat has no other weapon but organisation.
>
> "Absolute centralisation and the strictest discipline of the proletariat constitute one of the fundamental conditions for victory over the bourgeoisie."

Centralism means, in practice, that there should be a single political line, one set of party rules, a single guiding centre and a uniform discipline applicable to all with decisions of higher bodies binding on the lower bodies and the minority submitting to the majority. Without these principles the party cannot be a single organised whole, capable of exercising systematic and organised leadership in the revolutionary struggle. The Mensheviks objected to these principles and dubbed them as "bureaucratic" and "formalism". Lenin characterised the fight against those principles as "aristocratic anarchism" and exposed and condemned them.

> "This aristocratic anarchism is particularly characteristic of the Russian nihilist. He thinks of the party organisation as a monstrous 'factory'; he regards the subordination of the part to the whole and of the minority to the majority as 'serfdom'... division of labour under the direction of a centre evokes from him a tragicomical outcry against transforming people into 'cogs and wheels'... mention of the organisational rules of the party calls forth a contemptuous grimace and the disdainful remark... that one could very well dispense with rules altogether."

And this is how Lenin exposed and ridiculed those leaders who fulminated against Party Congress decisions as bureaucratic and as taken by mechanical majority.

> "It is clear, I think, that cries about this celebrated bureaucracy are just a screen for dissatisfaction with the personal composition of the central bodies, a fig leaf... You are a

> bureaucrat because you were appointed by the congress not in accordance with my wishes, but against them; you are a formalist because you take your stand on the formal decisions of the congress, and not on my consent; you are acting in a grossly mechanical way because you plead the 'mechanical' majority at the party congress and pay no heed to my wish to be coopted; you are an autocrat because you refuse to hand over the power to the old snug little band. . ."

In this connection it would also be useful to refer to the controversy Lenin had with the Mensheviks at the Third Congress of the RSDLP over the issue of federalism versus centralism and over the question of the authority of the central committee, i.e. the leading body in the party.

The Mensheviks opposed centralism and advocated the twin principles of federalism and autonomy. By federalism they meant the organisation of the party according to nationalities, with the party split into independent national organisations forming a federal union instead of a single centralised party. The Mensheviks considered the interference of the Central Committee in the work of local organisations to be superfluous and unnecessary. Therefore, they supported local autonomy.

Lenin supported the federal principle of state organisation but so far as the party is concerned he opposed it as harmful because it legalised particularism and isolation and made a principle of it. He firmly opposed organising the party on the nationality principle and insisted that its structure as its ideology must be based on internationalism. The congress repulsed the Bundists and the Mensheviks on this point and supported Lenin.

As against the Menshevik proposal that only those decisions of the Central Committee which concern the movement as a whole be binding on lower units and not those decisions which concern local issues Lenin insisted that all decisions of the Central Committee must be binding on lower units. This

does not mean the banning or shackling of local initiative. The local units must display initiative and have autonomy in deciding local issues but with the proviso that those decisions do not contradict general party directives. This follows from the fact that the party must follow the principle of centralism.

Centralism however must be based on democracy and not degenerate into bureaucratic centralism. Democracy means that all leading party bodies from top to bottom are elected and they are answerable to the organs that elect them. It also means that these bodies periodically report to these organs. But Lenin considered the essence of party democracy to consist in the democracy of vigorous common action, i.e. a democracy in which the members of the party not only elect and discuss, but also take a practical part in guiding the work of the party.

Lenin wrote:

> "The whole party organisation is now built on a democratic basis. This means that all the party members take part in the election of officials, committee members and so forth, that all party members discuss and decide questions concerning the political campaigns of the proletariat, and that all the party members determine the line of tactics of the party organisations."

Without this essence of innerparty democracy, i.e. "living association of common endeavour", democracy becomes merely barren, formal democracy leading to the same dualism in the party as pervades the bourgeois state—i.e. the dualism between the bureaucracy and the people. It splits the organisation into active functionaries and passive masses. This tendency is deep rooted and has to be consistently fought.

Democratic centralism also means freedom of discussion and criticism plus unity of action. Centralism does not rule out difference of opinion, nor the freedom to discuss and criticise. On the other hand innerparty democracy must be developed to the full, ensuring that all party units and members display the maximum political and practical initiative and

take part in deciding and implementing party policies. But the Communist Party is a party of action and not a debating club. Hence after discussion decisions must be taken and whether unanimous or by majority they must be enforced. After a decision has been taken by the proper party bodies there must be unity of action, i.e. the whole party must act as one. Similarly freedom of criticism does not mean freedom to express any views anywhere. While answering the demand for absolute freedom of criticism Lenin wrote:

> "Every one is free to write and say whatever he likes, without any restrictions. But every voluntary association (including the party) is also free to expel members who use the name of the party to advocate antiparty views. The party is a voluntary association, which would inevitably break up, first ideologically and then physically, if it did not cleanse itself of people advocating antiparty views. And to define the border line between party and antiparty there are the party programme, the party's resolutions on tactics and its rules."

It would be instructive to keep in mind what according to Lenin constitute antiparty views, as freedom to propagate all sorts of views and criticisms is nowadays demanded—and sometimes even made use of—by some individuals on the plea of "party democracy", "genuine differences", "need for public debate", etc. And even Lenin is cited in support of such demands.

For providing effective centralised leadership to the working class movement Lenin attached great importance to collective functioning and consistently opposed all methods of individual functioning and any deviations from it towards setting up an authority or building a personality cult. It is only the collective experience of the party and the collective wisdom of the leading bodies that ensure the party a correct leadership and provide the best guarantee for avoiding mistakes. Lenin consistently followed this principle. Even when leader of the Soviet government he never took a decision alone. He held

that collective leadership is supreme principle of party and government leadership. He always attached great importance to party congresses, and conferences and plenary meetings of the Central Committee, regarding them as the embodiment of the collective thought and the vast political and organisational experience of the party. He held that it was for them to decide the fundamental issues of party policies. It may also be mentioned here that during Lenin's life the Communist International held regular annual congresses.

An organic fusion of centralism and democracy is not an easy task. Lenin showed great flexibility and firmness in doing this in the changing conditions of the revolutionary struggle. For example when the party was illegal and working underground the principle of election could not be enforced. But during the 1905 revolution when the rise of the movement enabled the Bolsheviks to a considerable extent to work openly the principle of election of bodies wherever possible was introduced.

Lenin held that while the basic organisational principles of the Communist Party are of universal validity the forms in which they are embodied vary according to the situation, according to the concrete conditions in different countries and at different times. However, whatever the conditions he insisted that the unity of centralism and democracy must never be violated and they must not be contraposed to each other. That would lead to serious consequences for the party. For example if centralism is taken as the only principle of party organisation it would lead to bureaucratism, and to a weakening of the activity and initiative, if democracy is contraposed to centralism it would lead to anarchy in organisational questions, the emergence of groups and factions and the breakdown of party discipline.

Violation of democratic centralism, of the principles of collective leadership and innerparty democracy in the period of Stalin personality cult, caused most serious damage to the entire communist movement. The 20th Congress of the CPSU restored the Leninist norms and standards of party life and

rendered historic service to the whole movement—though a few like the Chinese Communist Party have learnt nothing and Mao's personality cult, along with other deviations from Marxism-Leninism, is endangering the party and all the gains of socialism in China. Drawing lessons from the bitter experience the representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties in their Statement of 1960 stated:

> "Marxist-Leninist parties regard it as an inviolable law of their activity steadfastly to observe the Leninist standards of party life in keeping with the principle of democratic centralism; they consider that they must cherish party unity like the apple of their eye, strictly to adhere to the principle of party democracy and collective leadership, for they attach, in keeping with the organisational principles of Leninism, great importance to the role of the leading party bodies in the life of the party, to work indefatigably for the strengthening of their bonds with the party membership and with the broad masses of the working people, not to allow the personality cult, which shackles creative thought and initiative of communists, vigorously to promote the activity of communists, and to encourage criticism and selfcriticism in their ranks."

The experience of the Communist Party of India provides ample confirmation of the truth of the proposition that any deviation from democratic centralism, any contraposing of one aspect against the other, has serious consequences for the communist organisation and movement.

This is how the Organisational Report of the Bombay (Seventh) Party Congress of the Communist Party of India briefly referred to this matter:

> "It is admitted generally that in our party, as in several other communist parties, the fundamental principle of democratic centralism was interpreted in a way that democracy got restricted and bureaucracy and authoritarianism developed. But when an extremely adventurist political line was thrust on the party during the period 1948-51, as a

reaction to harmful consequences of that adventurist line, looseness of discipline and liberalism developed in the name of innerparty democracy. It is true that some form of innerparty democracy, and political discussions through forums was introduced. But the system of organised innerparty democracy was not developed as a channel for expression of opinions of comrades on issues facing the party. As a result, looseness, indiscipline, gossip, disobeying party resolutions and such other things still remain to a great extent in our party".

Thus from bureaucratic centralism, centralism at the cost of innerparty democracy, to ultrademocracy and an anarchic state of affair, in party organisation virtually nullifying centralism and discipline—these were the two extremes the Communist Party of India experienced in the first few post-independence years. The situation is better now with respect to both the aspects of centralism and democracy. But it must be admitted that it still leaves much to be desired. Much needs to be done to enforce strict centralism and discipline, on the one hand, and to make innerparty democracy real and not only formal, on the other. The Organisational Report of the Patna (Eighth) Party Congress pointed out:

"Tendencies of indiscipline, bourgeois habits and methods persist...

"While leading personnel are there in many states, there is lack of proper team work and check up in most cases; tendencies of individual functioning, frontism and localism are very strong; liberalism in the matter of discipline and check up has grown."

It may be stated here that this applies all round and not merely to state committees.

The most serious shortcoming with regard to innerparty democracy is the failure in respect of making the basic party units—the branches—function regularly and to lead and organise everyday activity of the party members. The lack of regular everyday activity by the party branches and the serious

weakness of the bonds between the leadership and the branches are some of the most serious weaknesses of the party and they have a most harmful impact on the entire work of the party. That is why the Patna Congress discussed the problem at length and worked out ways and means of overcoming the weaknesses.

## VI

In the course of building the party of a new type Lenin had to wage a titanic struggle on two fronts, against both right and left opportunism, in the sphere of ideology and organisation. Lenin held this struggle to be indispensable for ideological and organisational unity and consolidation of the party, an immutable law of the existence and development of the revolutionary Marxist party. He analysed the sources of and conditions for the penetration of alien ideological influences—bourgeois and petty bourgeois outlooks and prejudices—into the party and emphasised the necessity of continuous and systematic ideological work and intolerance of and struggle against all distortions of Marxism.

Lenin led a consistent struggle against Russian and international revisionism which included Bernsteinism, "legal Marxism", "economism" and Menshevism and the like. Lenin exposed the political essence of right opportunism as class collaboration, or class peace, repudiating the dictatorship of the proletariat and the need for revolutionary action. He gave a lucid and precise definition of right opportunistic tactics:

> "To determine its conduct from case to case, to adapt itself to the events of the day and to the chopping and changing of petty politics, to forget the primary interests of the proletariat and the basic features of the whole capitalist system, of all capitalist evolution, to sacrifice these fundamental interests for the real or assumed advantages of the moment. . ."

Lenin showed right opportunism as usually linked with revisionism and liquidationism. Revisionists endeavour to "re-

vise" or in reality to distort fundamental theses of Marxism, under the guise of bringing Marxism uptodate. Lenin pointed out that revisionism is "one of the chief, if not the chief manifestation of bourgeois influence on the proletariat and bourgeois corruption of the workers". Revisionism disarms and demobilises the working people in the struggle against the class enemy.

Revisionism leads to liquidationism, i.e., to the endeavour to liquidate the party or to transform it into a reformist organisation—such endeavours may be open or concealed according to conditions. We have seen above how Lenin fought the Economists who denied the need for a Marxist party and the Mensheviks who wanted a reformist, not a revolutionary party. After the defeat of the first Russian revolution, during the period of Stolypin reaction the party was driven underground and came under terrible attack. Many wavering elements deserted the party and in a section vacillations appeared. These took the form of the emergence of the "liquidators" who wanted to do away with the illegal party and advocated the formation of a broad nonparty organisation, a "labour association", i.e. an open legal amorphous party working on the sufference of Stolypin. Lenin fought and routed the "liquidators", denouncing them as people who would make the party an appendage of reaction and liquidate the illegal party.

Nowadays preaching open blatant liquidationism is difficult. But revisionists seek to transform the Communist Party into a debating club by demanding unfettered freedom of discussion and freedom for the minority to propagate its views even after decisions have been taken by the appropriate party bodies. Even the freedom to organise factions is demanded. The most ferocious attacks by the revisionists are against the Leninist principles of democratic centralism as antiquated and superfluous.

Lenin had also to wage a consistent struggle against left opportunism—such as the "Otzovists", the "left communists" and Trotskyites. He exposed its theoretical basis in dogmatism or doctrinairism leading organisationally to sectarianism.

The sectarian trend within the party, known as "Otzovists",

appeared in the period of Stolypin reaction. "Otzovists" demanded the recall of the Bolshevik deputies from the Duma (the tsarist assembly) because in their view they could do nothing in a house packed with reactionaries. Lenin firmly opposed them and denounced them as left phrasemongers who would isolate the party from the masses as they were hampering the party's efforts to use the Duma platform and to build up support in the semilegal and legal working class organisations. Lenin dubbed "Otzovism" as "liquidationism inside out." He pointed out that despite its reactionary character the Duma served as an important forum for the Bolsheviks—an important link of the illegal party with the masses—through which the Bolsheviks could reach out their propaganda to the masses. He firmly upheld the principle of combining legal and illegal work in the organisational activities of the party.

The "left communists" and the Trotskyites opposed the Brest-Litovsk peace and wanted to "push" the revolution. On the organisational plane they stood for authoritarianism and compulsion instead of persuasion. In innerparty struggle Trotsky excelled in using methods of duplicity, factionalism and ultimately splittism, which called forth the sharpest condemnation from Lenin.

In his classical work *"Leftwing" Communism* Lenin took up the struggle against left opportunism on the international plane. At this time Lenin called it "An Infantile Disorder". But as "leftist" trends remained still strong and threatened to isolate the communist parties from the masses Lenin warned at the time of the Third Congress of the Communist International (1921) against the danger of sectarianism and adventurism and said, "If the congress is not going to wage a vigorous offensive against such errors, against such 'leftist' stupidities, the whole movement is doomed. That is my deep conviction."

Lenin's fight against left opportunism has great relevance for us in India today. And for two reasons. Firstly, a big chunk of the communist movement has adopted this course: secondly, this big chunk now divided and further split into three sections, is united on using Lenin's name to cover up its sectarian,

adventurist and disruptive course and in seeking to make itself out as the only consistently revolutionary force.

Lenin summed up brilliantly the experience of the Bolsheviks' struggle against left opportunism in his "*Leftwing*" *Communism*:

> "Little is known in other countries of the fact that Bolshevism took shape, developed and became steeled in the long years of struggle against *petty bourgeois revolutionism*, which smacks of anarchism, or borrows something from the latter and, in all essential matters, does not measure up to the conditions and requirements of a consistently proletarian class struggle. Marxist theory has established—and the experience of all European revolutions and revolutionary movements has fully confirmed—that the petty proprietor, the small master (a social type existing on a very extensive and even mass scale in many European countries), who, under capitalism, always suffers oppression and very frequently a most acute and rapid deterioration in his conditions of life, and even ruin, easily goes to revolutionary extremes, but is incapable of perseverance, organisation, discipline and steadfastness. A petty bourgeois driven to frenzy by the horrors of capitalism is a social phenomenon which, like anarchism, is characteristic of all capitalist countries. The instability of such revolutionism, its barrenness, and its tendency to turn rapidly into submission, apathy, phantasms, and even a frenzied infatuation with one bourgeois fad or another—all this is common knowledge. However, a theoretical or abstract recognition of these truths does not at all rid revolutionary parties of old errors, which always crop up at unexpected occasions, in somewhat new forms, in a hitherto unfamiliar garb or surroundings, in an unusual—a more or less unusual—situation."

Lenin's characterisation of petty bourgeois revolutionism, its social basis and genesis, its manifestations and features, throws brilliant light on the left communist trends in our

country today, whether of the Naxalites or the Communist Party (Marxist).

The whole characterisation is so very relevant and appropriate to them and shows up their real essence as petty bourgeois revolutionism, apt to go to revolutionary extremes, unstable, barren and liable "to turn rapidly into submission, apathy, phantasms". And we have the phenomenon of a repetition—albeit "in somewhat new forms"! The repetition here is not of some other party's mistakes but those of the Communist Party of India itself!

How does left opportunism express itself in organisation? It expresses itself in failure to make use of the available possibilities to develop the movement and the organisation. The failure of the "Otzovists" to make use of legal possibilities, the refusal of some communist leaders to work in reactionary trade unions and bourgeois parliaments which Lenin criticised sharply in the above book are some example of this. It also finds expression in an endeavour to discard democracy and collective forms of leadership, to centralise everything and to transform conscious party discipline into a mechanical discipline based on commandism and intimidation. This was what the Communist Party of India experienced in the year 1948-51 when the party leadership followed a dogmatist and left sectarian course. It is common knowledge what havoc it played with the organisation.

Subjectivism and lack of scientific analysis of reality are characteristic of both left and right opportunism, both dogmatism and revisionism. Hence both are harmful.

Lenin pointed out that revisionism and dogmatism supplement each other, serve as fertile soil and a catalyst for each other. Both are alien to creative Marxism and both must be fought consistently. He also warned that if the danger from any of those deviations is overlooked it grows to menacing proportions. Hence his emphasis on the fight on two fronts.

## VII

Before proceeding further it would not be out of place here to discuss how the violation of Leninist norms and standards of party life and his organisational principles has had disastrous results for the communist movement in India. Today everyone admits the great damage caused to the democratic movement in India in general and the communist movement in particular by the split in the Communist Party of India in 1964. Let us briefly examine the background of the split and the methods employed by those who walked out of the National Council of the Communist Party of India and later organised the rival party in the light of the organisational principles elaborated by Lenin. This is all the more necessary because these would-be "Marxist" leaders have all along sought to justify their actions by seeking to take shelter behind the struggle waged by Lenin against the Mensheviks. Dubbing the Communist Party of India as "revisionist" and "class collaborationist" they have justified what they were doing as the only way to build up a really revolutionary party on correct Marxist-Leninist lines.

This is not the place to go into the question of their political line and how subsequent developments have made mincemeat of it, making it more and more clear that their charge of "revisionism" against the CPI only seeks to cover up their own dogmatic and sectarian line and the worst opportunism in practice. But it is necessary to state that their dogmatist and left sectarian political line was accompanied by a repudiation of democratic centralism, the supreme principle of party organisation and by a number of other anti-Leninist organisational practices.

How did these left sectarian leaders carry on their struggle inside the party before they split off? Their methods were the direct opposite of Lenin's methods. Both at the time of Palghat Party Congress (1956) and Vijayawada Party Congress (1961) the majority opposed their alternative line as left sectarian. At Palghat the alternative draft was rejected; at Vijayawada, faced

with certain defeat, they withdrew their draft resolution. At both congresses the adopted line was also supported by them. They were not prepared to remain in the minority and before the organisational elections they formally supported the line of the majority. After the Party Congress they put their own interpretations on the political line of the congress and in practice sabotaged it. Today when the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has its own separate programme in writing and the resolutions of their Calcutta and Ernakulam party congresses—and besides the documents their practice as an independent party for the last six years or so it is easy for anyone to see and verify for himself that the political analysis and strategic and tactical line adopted by the two Communist Party of India (Marxist) congresses are in contradiction with those of Palghat and Vijayawada congresses. On the other hand the analysis and line of the Communist Party of India Bombay and Patna congresses (1964 and 1968) are in line with the Palghat and Vijayawada congresses. This means that all along they sharply differed with the accepted party line but finding themselves in a minority they formally accepted the line and in practice repudiated it instead of sticking to their positions, voting against a line they disagreed with but after its adoption by the Party Congress honestly carrying it out.

Lenin was in the minority many a time in the Central Committee and sometimes in the Party Congress. But he never supported a line he did not agree with; at the same time he bowed before majority decisions and where necessary fought inside the party to win over the majority to his side. When Lenin and the Bolsheviks were in the minority at the Fourth Party Congress they did not conceal their objections to the congress decisions. "But at the same time", Lenin said, "we declare to the whole party that we are opposed to a split of any kind. We stand for submission to the decisions of the congress."

But the left sectarian leaders did quite the opposite of this. They would conceal their differences and formally agree at the

Party Congress for the sake of organisational bargaining, only to sabotage the congress line afterwards.

With their opportunist approach to the political line went their factional approach in the sphere of organisation. At the Vijayawada Party Congress fortythree of them withdrew their names as a bloc from the panel of the new National Council in order to pressurise the Party Congress. And this was not the only occasion when they followed such tactics.

When differences grew very acute in 1962-63 they began virtually functioning as a party within the party, setting up their own rival centre and bringing out rival papers and holding separate faction and general body meetings where they propagated their own views about political-organisational questions and defied all party rules and standards. At this time in order to resolve the serious innerparty differences it was decided to make preparations for a fresh party congress and organise innerparty discussions on the possible alternative lines. These leaders refused to cooperate with the drafting commission and circulated their own draft programme separately to a section of the party cadres and started making preparations for a rival congress. But all this was sought to be covered up by organisational manoeuvring and the diversion of the socalled Dange letters. Instead of an honest political struggle they let loose campaign of vilification and character assassination to befuddle the issues and work up sentiments. Instead of waging the struggle inside the party to win the majority they followed the method of revolt and walkout from the party and defiance of the majority and of the party. The split and formation of the rival party was only a culmination of their anti-Leninist organisational practices inside the party. This path of factionalism, disruption and splittism has nothing to do with Lenin's methods and has family resemblance with the methods adopted by those opportunist trends which Lenin had to struggle against.

Here it may be pointed out that along with their blatant violation of democratic centralism went a similarly opportunist attitude to the international communist movement. They for-

mally accepted the line of the 1960 Statement of the eightyone parties and for four years went on making declarations to that effect, while actually disagreeing with it. Then they came out in support of the famous (!) June letter of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Now they say they disagree with the recent positions of the Chinese party leadership but agree with the June letter. Simultaneously they take a centrist position with regard to the vast majority of the communist parties on the one hand and the Chinese leadership on the other. And they seek to cover up their opportunism and anti-internationalism by the claim that theirs is the really independent party!

But this 'independence' was not in evidence when they split the party in the wake of exhortations from the Chinese leadership from Peking and the leadership of the Communist Party of Indonesia.

This does not mean that only the leaders of the present Communist Party of India (Marxist) are to blame for the split in the communist movement. The major share of the blame must go to them. But a part of the responsibility has to be shared by the Communist Party of India leadership also and this has been frankly admitted in the Organisational Report of the Seventh Party Congress of the Communist Party of India. A reference has already been made to some failures of the party in the sphere of ideological work. The failure to enforce strict observance of party decisions and the gross liberalism that had engulfed the party, the failure to develop innerparty democracy and draw the party ranks into the struggle against antiparty views and trends, the line of opportunist adjustments and tolerance of factional activities were nailed down as contributory causes of the split and as part of the explanation for a big chunk of the party ranks following the sectarian leaders.

> "It is well known that our party has for some time been divided on certain important questions. Even when particular resolutions are adopted by the various units of the

party, these resolutions are interpreted in different ways by different sections of the party. Differences cover some basic issues which have been under discussion in the international communist movement. There are, however, several other issues which touch the economic, political and cultural life of our own people. Furthermore, differences once arisen, in the absence of organised efforts to get them resolved, not only fail to get resolved but get accumulated. The position was made worse due to the fact that the party ranks were not properly informed of the differences; neither of the international communist movement nor on the problems of the Indian situation. No proper inner-party discussion was organised. The section of the party which later on split it, however, continued to propagate its views in a onesided factional manner.

"Yet another serious defective feature that developed was to adopt vague resolutions. These resolutions continued to be differently interpreted. To be able to have a correct understanding and educate the party on correct understanding, it is necessary to negate the incorrect understanding. Failure to do this and confining ourselves to the above method aggravated the situation.

"These methods of liberalism towards alien trends and practices, a policy of compromise with and concessions to such trends and practices, had come to stay in the party and this took some very harmful forms too.

"In the situation, when the ideological positions had not been explained to the party members for a long time, when serious efforts had not been made to combat the deeprooted dogmatist and sectarian understandings and when party members had not been informed about these problems or the differences that existed and developed in this situation, when some concrete problems of organisation arose, efforts were made to somehow solve them with a view to keep the unity of the party. Such solutions, however, were many times opportunist adjustments, tolerance of factional groupings and even tolerance of state

leaderships going in their own way in defiance of the Party Congress line.

"Comrades used to be put in responsible positions even though it was known that they have been using their positions not for honest implementation of the decisions but to undermine and even sabotage them; the election of the secretariat in April 1962 is an instance of the same.

"Such organisational methods strengthened the position of those elements and assisted in their being able to deflect so many comrades."

It cannot be claimed that the bitter lessons learnt from the split and outlined above have been fully imbibed, i.e. put into practice by eliminating all those anti-Leninist methods and practices. Most of them still persist, though of course not in that gross form, and have to be completely uprooted if the party is to be fully unified from top to bottom and made into an effective militant vanguard of the toiling masses.

## VIII

For reasons of space it is not possible to take up all other issues and problems connected with the party and party building that Lenin dealt with theoretically and practically. But some specific questions may be briefly referred to here for two reasons; firstly, due to their intrinsic importance and secondly, their great relevance for us in the present situation in our country when a mass Marxist-Leninist party would be a great revolutionising factor and when our party building work is faced with similar problems and tasks. And one may say: "Let us consult Lenin."

### *The Problem of Ties with the Masses*

Lenin always laid the greatest emphasis on the party strengthening its ties with the masses. He pointed out that the party must neither run ahead of the masses nor idolise them and become a tail of the masses; it must avoid both vanguard-

ism and tailism, both sectarian isolation from the masses and opportunist adaptation to backward sentiments, and be a real leader of the masses, marching at the head of the masses and with them. It must always keep its fingers on the pulse of the masses and ever seek to strengthen its contacts with them.

Contact with the people meant, he wrote,
"To live in the *very midst* of the masses.
"To know their *mood.*
"To know *everything.*
"To understand the masses.
"To be able to approach them.
"To win their *absolute* confidence.
"Not to isolate the leaders from the masses who are being led, the vanguard from the whole army of labour."

In his book *"Leftwing" Communism* Lenin sharply criticised the sectarian views of certain communist leaders abroad that communists must not participate in bourgeois parliaments, they must not work in reactionary trade unions dominated by reformist leaders and rebutting their arguments he emphasised that communists must not fence themselves off from the masses and must work wherever there are masses.

He wrote:

"To serve the mass and express *its* properly sensed interests, the advanced detachment, the organisation, must conduct all its activities in the mass, drawing from it all—without exception—the best forces, checking at each step, thoroughly and objectively, whether the ties with the mass are maintained, whether they are alive. In such, and *only* in such a way, does the advanced detachment educate and enlighten the mass, expressing its interests, teaching it organisation, guiding *all* the activities of the mass along the path of conscious class policy."

### *The Problem of Discipline*

The Bolsheviks led by Lenin maintained iron discipline in their ranks. Discipline within a Communist Party, which is a

voluntary organisation, cannot be imposed from above but has to be voluntary and conscious discipline. In his famous book *"Leftwing" Communism—An Infantile Disorder* Lenin points out that "absolute centralisation and the strictest discipline of the proletariat constitute one of the fundamental conditions for victory over the bourgeoisie". He goes on to explain how Bolshevism was able to maintain iron discipline under the most difficult conditions.

> "The first questions to arise are: how is the discipline of the proletariat's revolutionary party maintained? How is it tested? How is it reinforced? First, by the class consciousness of the proletarian vanguard and by its devotion to the revolution, by its tenacity, selfsacrifice and heroism. Second, by its ability to link up, maintain the closest contact, and—if you wish—merge, in a certain measure, with the broadest masses of the working people—primarily with the proletariat, *but also with the nonproletarian* masses of working people. Third, by the correctness of the political leadership exercised by this vanguard, by the correctness of its political strategy and tactics, provided that the broad masses have seen, *from their own experience,* that they are correct. Without these conditions, discipline in a revolutionary party really capable of being the party of the advanced class, whose mission it is to overthrow the bourgeoisie and transform the whole of society, cannot be achieved. Without these conditions, all attempts to establish discipline inevitably fall flat and end in phrasemongering and clowning. On the other hand, these conditions cannot emerge at once. They are created only by prolonged effort and hard-won experience. Their creation is facilitated by correct revolutionary theory, which, in its turn, is not a dogma, but assumes final shape only in close connection with the practical activity of a truly mass and truly revolutionary movement."

## *The Problem of Cadre Shortage*

Lenin devoted great attention to the problem of cadres, to training, preserving, promoting and testing cadres. And considered it as one of the key questions of organisational work. It is not possible to go into all that for reasons of space. But it would be instructive to see what he had to say in *What Is To Be Done?* on the complaints that there is a shortage of cadres for the reason that our movement today has to tackle a similar problem in a very acute form:

> "The fact is that society produces very *many* persons fit for *'the cause'*, but we are unable to make use of them all. The critical, transitional state of our movement in this respect may be formulated as follows: *There are no people—yet there is a mass of people.* There is a mass of people, because the working class and increasingly varied strata, year after year, produce from their ranks an increasing number of discontented people who desire to protest, who are ready to render all the assistance they can in the struggle against absolutism, the intolerableness of which, though not yet recognised by all, is more and more acutely sensed by increasing masses of the people. At the same time, we have no people, because we have no leaders, no political leaders, no talented organisers capable of arranging extensive and at the same time uniform and harmonious work that would employ all forces, even the most inconsiderable. 'The growth and development of the revolutionary organisations' lag, not only behind the growth of the working class movement, which even B—v admits, but behind that of the general democratic movement among all strata of the people. (In passing, probably B—v would now regard this as supplementing his conclusion.) The scope of revolutionary work is too narrow, as compared with the breadth of the spontaneous basis of the movement. It is too hemmed in by the wretched theory of 'economic struggle against the employers and the government'. Yet, at the present time, not only social democratic

political agitators, but social democratic organisers must 'go among all classes of the population'. There is hardly a single practical worker who will doubt that the social democrats could distribute the thousand and one minute functions of their organisational work among individual representatives of the most varied classes. Lack of specialisation is one of the most serious defects of our technique, about which B—v justly and bitterly complains."

### *The Communist Press*

Lenin attached the greatest importance to the party press as one of the most important pillars of the movement. The party paper, he said, is a collective agitator, propagandist and organiser and every communist must support it in all possible ways as it is his daily weapon which must be newly hardened and sharpened every day in order to be fit for use. Lenin himself worked with indefatigable energy to develop the party press and from *Iskra, Vperyod, Novaya Zhizn, Proletary, Sotsial Democrat* to *Pravda,* he either himself edited the central organs or was closely associated with them. As editor he paid close attention to every detail concerning the paper, checking almost everything printed in it, keeping contact with correspondents and agents, and checking up on the managerial and distribution problems. Even when not the editor he contributed most regularly to the paper. He laid the greatest emphasis on the entire party at all levels doing all it could to improve, strengthen and popularise the paper, canvass support for it, collect contributions and subscriptions for it and also to use it in the daily struggle.

The communist paper must be a militant paper giving battle to the enemy by its agitation and propaganda and educating and mobilising the masses. The paper must also actively participate in the campaigns being carried on by the party at any particular moment.

Lenin assigned an exalted role to the party press in the sphere of winning and training cadres also. When during the

war brutal terror was unleashed against the Bolsheviks Lenin wrote in November 1914:

> "The work of our party has now become 100 times more difficult. And still we shall carry it on! *Pravda* has trained up thousands of class-conscious workers out of whom, in spite of all difficulties, a new collective of leaders—the Russian CC of the party—will be formed."

We, in India, are still far from having understood this role and significance of the party press. Our resolutions and decisions, no doubt, are good but, according to the adage "the way to hell is paved with good intentions", our practice remains in many ways anti-Leninist.

*Implementation and Check Up*

"For Lenin the adoption of a correct decision was only the starting point; the most important part was its implementation. 'Any plan, even the very best, can be completely ruined by incompetent and stupid execution', Lenin pointed out time and again.

"Through his instructions and directives, both verbal and written, Lenin taught people to work efficiently and to see every undertaking through to the end. His letters and countless notes, many of them written on scraps of paper, contained the most valuable ideas, practical advice, and sometimes entire programmes of action. While busy with political matters of cardinal importance, he took a lively interest in hundreds of thousands of seemingly minor questions, for nothing was too trifling to claim his attention if it served a useful purpose. Concrete leadership was the hallmark of Lenin's style of work.

"Most important for the proper functioning of the administrative machinery, Lenin pointed out, was to select the right people for the right jobs and to check on the fulfilment of decisions, tasks and directives. Emphasising that the party and government cadres should always bear this in mind, he said: *'To test men and verify what has*

*actually been done*—this, this again, this alone is now the main feature of all our activities, of our whole policy.' " (*Lenin*: A *Biography*).

Lenin ridiculed the communist bureaucrat who thinks leadership means issuing decrees:

"Communist vanity is characteristic of a man who, while still a member of the Communist Party, not having yet been combed out of it, imagines that he can solve all his problems by issuing communist decrees."

Concrete leadership and not general directives, verification not by formal reports but by what has actually been done, and attention to every detail, and everyday work—this is what Lenin emphasised time and again.

"Fewer pompous phrases, more plain *everyday* work" (Lenin).

## IX

This party, built on Lenin's organisational principles, steeled and trained in innumerable struggles and in the first Russian revolution, stood ready to wage the decisive battle for socialism. Though numerically small (the Bolshevik Party had 60,000 members in April and 240,000 in October 1917) it was a real Leninist vanguard. From the very beginning Lenin had clearly seen and pointed out that great opportunities would open up in Russia for the victory of the revolution once the working class movement was headed by a wellorganised revolutionary Marxist party. His whole life and struggle were completely bound up with the life and struggle of this party. And now such a party was there, leading the fighting masses, while revolutionary situation had developed. Hence Lenin's supreme confidence in the party and in its capacity to lead the masses to victory. In June 1917 in the First All-Russia Congress of Soviets, the Menshevik leader Tsereteli, a minister in the Kerensky coalition government, challenged—"At the present

moment there is not a single political party in Russia that is prepared to say: Hand over the power to us get out and we will take your place."

Without a moment's hesitation Lenin accepted the challenge. His firm and resolute voice rang out from the middle of the silent hall—'There is such a party'. It came like a thunderbolt and Lenin came to the rostrum and at the end of a powerful speech again declared confidently:

"I reply: 'Yes there is. No party can refuse this and our party certainly doesn't. It is ready to take over full power at any moment'."

And within four months it did. This was the result of the combination of objective and subjective factors of the development of a revolutionary situation in Russia and of the existence, activity and leadership of the Bolshevik party trained steeled and equipped by Lenin to utilise this situation and lead the working people to victory.

After the October revolution Lenin wrote: "To govern we must have an army of steeled revolutionary communists we have it it is called the party"

Led by this party and Lenin the Russian workers and peasants defeated the interventionists and the forces of internal counterrevolution and started the work of social st construction. This task has been accomplished by the CPSU after Lenin's death along the path charted by him.

When Lenin died the Central Committee of the CPSU said in its message to the working people:

> "Never since Marx has the history of the great liberation movement of the proletariat produced such a titanic figure as our departed leader, teacher and friend All that is truly great and heroic in the proletariat—a fearless mind a will of iron, unbending persistent and able to surmount all obstacles a burning undying hatred of slavery and oppression a revolutionary passion that moves mountains boundless faith in the creative energies of the masses vast organ-

> ısational genius—all this found splendid embodiment in Lenin, whose name has become the symbol of the new world from east to west, from north to south. . .
>
> ". . . Lenin lives on in the heart of every member of our party. Every member of our party is a part of Lenin. The whole of our communist family is the collective embodiment of Lenin. . ."

Today when the whole progressive mank nd is celebrating the birth centenary of Len n, this communist family has spread to all continents of the earth and in every nook and corner. Lenin lives in this international community of over 50 mill on communists and in the heart of st ll many times more who support them. Communists the world over proudly bear the banner of Leninism and str ve to imbibe those great and hero c qualities of the proletar at wh ch found the r embodi nent in Lenin Confident that Lenin s cause is invinc ble and equ pped with Leninism to face any challenge to meet any twists and turns in the situation the communist parties are marching in the van of world progress to final victory over imperialism and to a new world free of exploitation and wars.

## *About this Book . . .*

PPH is proud to present this volume to the readers on the occasion of the centenary of the birth of Lenin. In this an attempt has been made to study some of the problems facing us today in the light of method of Lenin.

The world of Marx was no more when Lenin started his practical revolutionary activity—he could depend only on his method, while "orthodox" Marxists clung to every comma and semicolon in Marx and came to grief and became counter-revolutionaries. The world of today is similarly different from that in which Lenin lived and likewise our problems and their solutions are different from those in his days.

Nevertheless there are "orthodox" Leninists who would rather apply quotations from Lenin than depend on his method for the solution of contemporary problems. Lenin once said that reactionaries would even refute geometric axioms if they conflicted with property relations. Alas, there are some "theoreticians" now who would refute reality itself if it did not conform to some pet quotations from Lenin.

This is an honour that Lenin would not have appreciated. In this book an attempt is made to see our world in the light of what Lenin taught. Leaders of the Communist Party have dealt with some of the urgent problems facing the country or that have arisen in the realm of theory. Lenin did not want hallelujahs, but study, study and more study.